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Piolo Pascual won't give up on Charo Santos

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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WYCOCO

Wycoco dies

By Margaux C.Ortiz
Metro

HE BATTLED ON FOR 26 days. But in the end, his heart gave way.

National Bureau of Investigation Director Reynaldo Wycoco died from complications at 6:16 p.m.

WYCOCO/ A6

Aunor not in drug rehab, lawyers say

By Janet Susan R. Nepales
LA Correspondent

LOS ANGELES—MOVIE ACTRESS NORA Aunor, fighting a charge of methamphetamine possession in the United States, has not enrolled in any drug diversion program with the Superior Court of California, her lawyers said.

AUNOR / A6

Firms go after Meralco

Industry leaders demand conversion of collectibles into equity

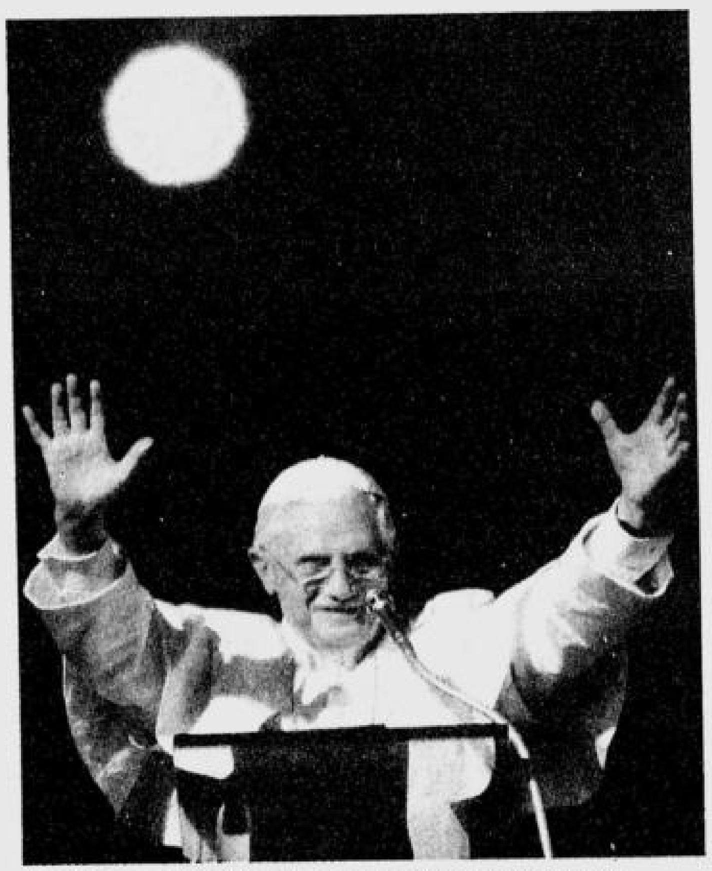
By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

EXASPERATED BY THE delay in Manila Electric Co.'s refund of P18 billion to private corporations, business leaders are seriously considering the adoption of the Arroyo administration's plan to exchange collectibles for shares in the Lopez-managed utility.

Jesus Arranza, president of the Federation of Philippine Industries, said a plan by President Macapagal-Arroyo to collect on the entire P42 billion allegedly owed by Meralco to state-owned National Power Corp. (Napocor) had prompted his group to consider pushing for the conversion of FPI members' collectibles into equity in the power distributor.

"Meralco has been ignoring our members' demands for reimbursement over the last two years. Probably, if we back up the government's position, they (Meralco officials) might start taking us seriously," said Arranza, who will consult with FPI members on the

FIRMS/ A14



POPE Benedict XVI waves to the faithful at St. Peter's Square. REUTERS

Pope says true gift of Christmas is joy

ROME—JOY, NOT COSTLY PRESENTS, is the true gift of Christmas.

This was the message of Pope Benedict XVI during a Sunday Mass as he paid his first visit as Pontiff to a working-class parish on Rome's outskirts.

"Joy is the true gift of Christmas—not expensive gifts that cost time and money, but joy," Benedict said in an impromptu 15-minute homily that he delivered in a sometimes hoarse voice.

He also proposed joy as an antidote to the ills of society. "In today's world, God is absent," Benedict said. "People need anesthesia to live. They live in a dark world."

The 78-year-old Pope, who was apparently suffering from a sore throat, said joy liberated people.

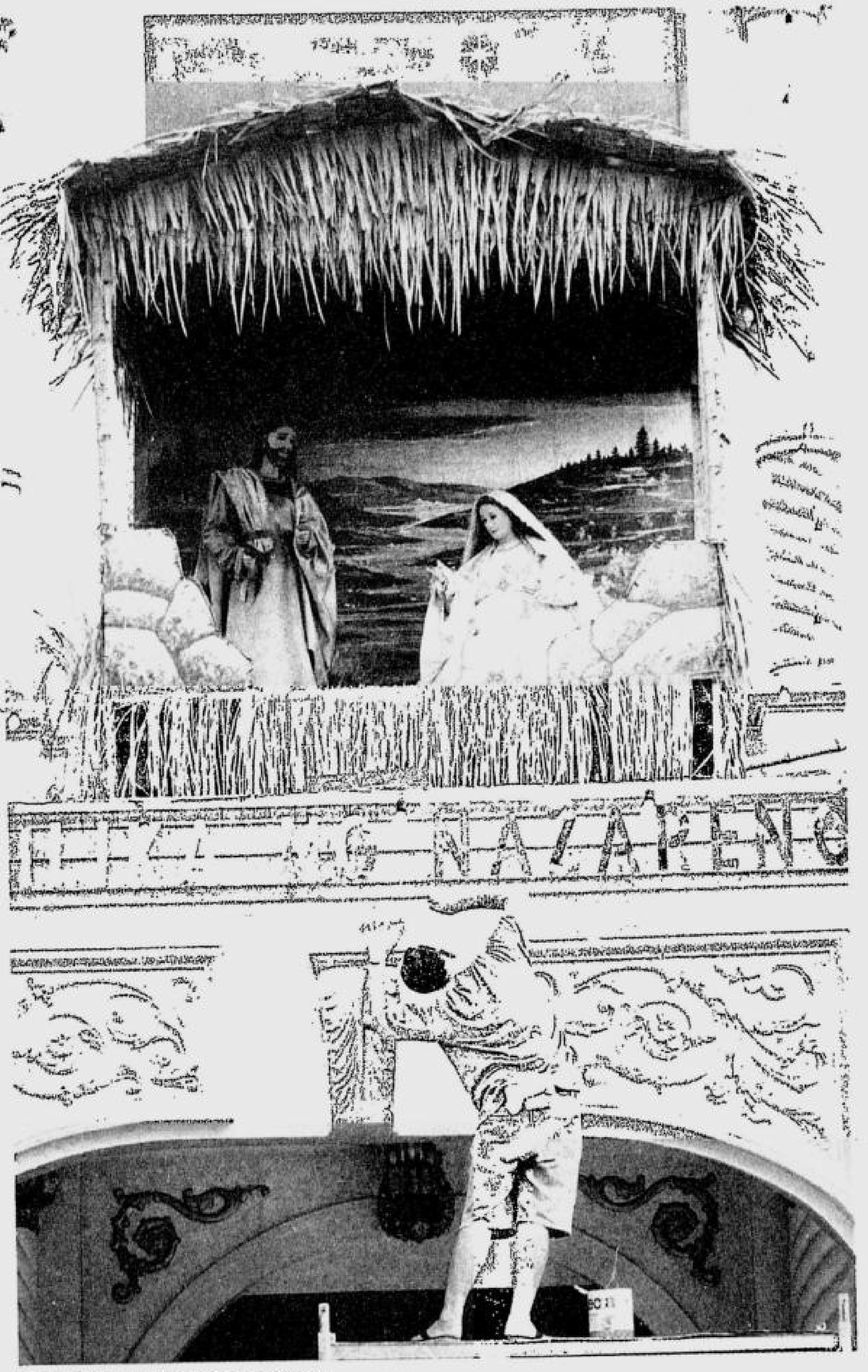
"It is joy that should be communicated. We can communicate joy in a simple way," he said. "With a smile, an act of kindness, a little help, forgiveness, you can bring joy, and that joy will come back to you."

The congregation in the packed church of the Santa Maria Consolatrice parish broke into applause.

The German Pope, who will mark his first Christmas as the Roman Catholic leader later this week, discarded his prepared text and delivered the entire sermon off the cuff.

It was the second time in as many weeks that the Pope warned against rampant materialism during the Christmas season. Earlier this month, he said

POPE SAYS/ A14



PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS
A church worker polishes the facade of Quiapo Church in Manila in preparation for the celebration of the birth of Christ on Christmas Day. REM ZAMORA

Meralco A, other stocks decline

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez
Business

FEARS OF A GOVERNMENT takeover of Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) sent some investors dumping shares of the utility and related stocks, pushing down Philippine share prices 1.2 percent yesterday.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index fell 22.86 points to 2,024.70 on turnover of 335.69 million shares worth P1.2 billion. Losers outnumbered gainers, 57 to 14, while 48 stocks were unchanged.

The decline in the stock market was led by Lopez flagship firm Benpres Holdings Corp., which owns 47 percent of First Philippine Holdings (First Holdings), the single largest shareholder in Meralco. Benpres fell 5.3 percent or six centavos to close at P1.08 a share.

Shares of First Holdings—the

MERALCO A/ A14

UN, Church unite in anti-AIDS campaign

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE UNITED NATIONS CAMPAIGN against the growing HIV and AIDS problem in the Philippines will soon include messages from the pulpit, not necessarily suggesting the use of condoms but the traditional Church prescription of abstinence and loyalty to partners.

The UN Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) has tapped Caritas and the Archdiocese of Manila for the project, considering the extent of their influence, especially among the urban poor.

A working group has been set up to map out specific strategies to prevent the spread of AIDS and HIV in the country, according to Dr. Elena Borromeo, UNAIDS country coordinator.

"The best time to prevent HIV is now," Borromeo told the INQUIRER yesterday. "Until the cases are low, let us stay ahead of the epidemic."

UN, CHURCH/ A14

ANG SAYA-SAYA!

Mike A takes SEAG champs to Disneyland

By Nikko Dizon

HO! HO! HO!

True to his promise, First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo yesterday played Santa Claus to Filipino gold medalists in the recent Southeast Asian Games by taking them to Hong Kong for a fling at its magical Disneyland.

All told, 337 people left on four separate planes—

MIKE/ A6

End feuds, Davide asks pols as farewell present

By Armand N. Nocum

RETIRING CHIEF JUSTICE HIlario Davide Jr. yesterday made an impassioned plea for politicians to end their feuds and turn their eyes on impoverished Filipinos suffering unspeakable miseries as a result of their squabbling.

Before an audience that included President Macapagal-Arroyo and former Presidents Corazon Aquino and Fidel V. Ramos, the 70-year-old Davide said during his retirement ceremony:

"It is a retiree's privilege to receive a parting gift and not to be begrudged for so accepting it. I will go further. I will beg for a gift. I beseech all who lead our government to grant me the gifts of words of peace, words of friendship, words of comfort, not for me, but towards each other," he said.

"I plead to the leaders of the national government to turn their eyes on the downtrodden who are growing in numbers and suffering unspeakable miseries, for

END/ A6

A BOY'S OWN TRIBUTE. Chief Justice Hilario Davide gets a kiss from a grandson during the unveiling of his portrait as part of the tribute to him on his retirement. LYN RILLON

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2005
E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

Second FRONTPAGE

Text us your feedback: Inquirer news name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern and Southern Luzon will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers becoming frequent over Bicol Region. Visayas and Mindanao will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of Luzon will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

COMPILED BY JAMIE ALARCON, PDI RESEARCH/12/20/05 SOURCE PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Partly Cloudy

6 die in Luzon floods; 13,000 flee

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

THE DEATH TOLL FROM FLOODS CAUSED BY heavy rains in Luzon and parts of the Visayas has risen to six, while close to 13,000 people remained in evacuation centers, the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) reported yesterday.

OCD Deputy Administrator Anthony Golez reported that floodwaters in the provinces of Aklan and Iloilo had receded and residents in affected areas had returned to their homes as of 3 p.m. yesterday.

However, floods continued to swamp many communities in the provinces of Oriental Mindoro, Palawan, Camarines Sur and Sorsogon, forcing at least 12,982 people to flee their homes and move into evacuation shelters, Golez said.

He said Oriental Mindoro appeared to be the hardest-hit, with 10,855 people still in evacuation centers. In Sorsogon, 772 people remained in shelters while 755 were evacuated in Camarines Sur and 400 in Palawan.

The tail-end of a cold front is expected to bring more rains to Southern Luzon, Bicol and the Visayas regions, according to the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa).

Reports reaching OCD in Manila said the bodies of Merlina Basan, 23, and Jason Basan, 5, both from Palawan were recovered last Dec. 12. The two had apparently drowned. Other drowning victims included Rogelio Dadivas, 51, who drowned in Barangay San Jose in Roxas, Palawan on Sunday; Ramir Almonte, 25, of Malinao, Albay who died on Friday; Efren Reyes, 30, and Domingo Rodriguez, 50, both of Bulan, Sorsogon, who died on Saturday.

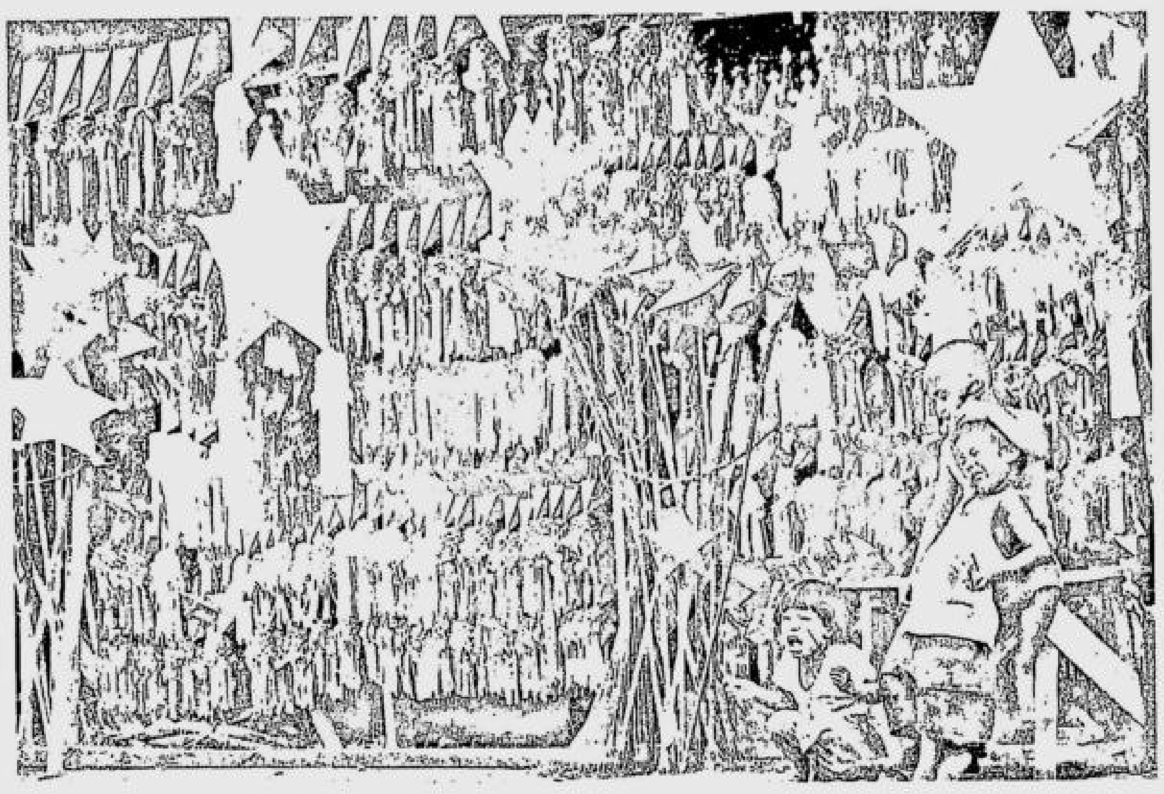
A 14-year-old boy, Clorico Flores, was still missing yesterday after being carried away by floodwaters in Kalibo, Aklan, on Saturday morning, Golez said.

OCD officials in the Southern Tagalog and Bicol region's estimated damage at P200 million in Mindoro and P4.7 million in Sorsogon.

Armando Duque, OCD Region IV director, said most of the city of Calapan was still under five feet of water and that the city was isolated because roads were impassable and the seaport was closed. Although the weather had improved, the situation was worsened by high tide, he said.

He said hotels and resorts in the city were now occupied by stranded motorists.

The OCD office in Southern Tagalog yesterday directed all shipping lines and bus companies using the roll-on, roll-off (roro) system via the Nautical Highway to divert their trips from the flood-stricken Calapan City port to Roxas Port in Oriental Mindoro and Caticlan port in Aklan. *With reports from Marlon Ramos, Jofelle P. Tesorio, Gil Francis Arevalo and Geraldine Ticke, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*



NO STOPPING CHRISTMAS

Business may be slow for lantern makers but this is of no moment to these innocents who enjoy playing in front of the "parol" stand of their parents along Roxas Boulevard in Pasay City. RYAN LIM

Subic rape suspects get holiday 'reprieve'

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

OLONGAPO CITY– PHILIPPINE prosecutors will wait until after Christmas to decide whether to file charges against six US Marines facing a rape complaint from a 22-year-old Filipino woman, officials said yesterday.

Prosecutors were investigating allegations that the soldiers, who took part in two-week military exercises in October, gang-raped the woman on Nov. 1 in a van at the Subic Bay Freeport.

They had been expected to make a decision about the charges by Dec. 25 after the submission of final arguments by both sides.

Prudencio Jalandoni, the chief prosecutor in Olongapo City, said his office must beat a 60-day deadline to determine whether there was enough evidence for the case to go to trial.

"I decided to move the issuance of a resolution to Dec. 27," Jalandoni told reporters. "We have to be very careful. We need extra time to read the arguments of the opposing sides because these would be our basis for determining who would be charged in court and who would be dropped or there would be no case at all."

An extension until January was out of the question, he added.

The woman who cried rape had pressed for the trial of the six US soldiers and their Filipino driver, calling them all principals in the alleged crime.

All the elements of rape – a heinous crime in the Philippines – as well as conspiracy were present in the supposed incident, her lawyers said in a memorandum filed at the prosecutor's office here yesterday.

Aside from the woman's own testimony that sexual intercourse took place with force, her lawyers cited a US Naval Criminal Investigative Service report to bolster that claim. *With Reuters*

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

AFP wants 2-day truce with NPA

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

THE ARMED FORCES OF THE Philippines said yesterday it has recommended a two-day holiday ceasefire with the New People's Army, the shortest in nearly two decades, in light of a recent escalation of rebel activity.

Military spokesperson Col. Tristan Kison told reporters that if the recommendation is approved by Malacañang, a unilateral cessation of hostilities could take place for 24 hours on Christmas and again on New Year's Day.

He said the recommendation was submitted to Malacañang last week, but President Macapagal-Arroyo has not issued any directive so far. However, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye told reporters last Sunday that the government would declare a truce even if the NPA did not reciprocate the "gesture of goodwill."

Kison said this year's proposed ceasefire would be the shortest truce with NPA because of continued attacks on military units and civilian targets such as mobile phone transmission relay sites. More than a dozen soldiers have died in landmine attacks by the NPA in the Visayas and Mindanao in recent weeks.

"The NPA has continued their atrocities," Kison said. "They have (had) so many violent activities for the past two weeks and, therefore, we have no choice; we have to confront them."

He said the military proposed the short-term truce "in the spirit of the holidays."

He said the military's proposal did not specify any dates or duration, leaving these matters for Malcañang to decide.

The longest Christmas ceasefire between government troops and communist rebels was observed in 1986, when newly installed President Corazon Aquino declared a 60-day ceasefire.

Last year, Malacañang declared a 20-day ceasefire from Dec. 17, 2004 to Jan. 5, 2005. The NPA, the military wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, reciprocated with a 10-day ceasefire from Dec. 17 to Dec. 26, 2004.

Kison said the military expected the rebels to escalate their offensive as the 37th anniversary of the founding of the NPA on Dec.26.

"In spite of the ceasefire we will be ready to confront them and to contain them," Kison added. "We should not allow the ceasefire to be used as a time for them to recruit, to retrain or in some cases to build or establish satellite camps."

Malacañang officials and the military leadership had earlier expressed doubt about a unilateral Christmas ceasefire this year, saying the guerrillas had been very aggressive lately. A spokesperson for the National Democratic Front had earlier ruled out any ceasefire but an NPA leader said Sunday that a ceasefire was still possible. *With a report from Reuters*

Pagasa to decentralize weather forecasting starting next year

LEGAZPI CITY–TO BE MORE EFfective and accurate in weather forecasting, particularly in calamity-prone areas across the country, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) is planning to decentralize its operations next year.

Dr. Prisco Nilo, Pagasa deputy director for operations and services, said the plan will address the "overwhelming recommendations" of almost all province-based Pagasa stations and the Regional Disasters Coordinating Councils in the country.

Nilo disclosed the plan during a seminar-workshop for media on Dec. 16 and 17, which is held annually by the Pagasa in coordination with the Department of Science and Technology, United Nations Development Program and the Environmental Natural Resources Shell Program.

He said severe weather bulletins, flood reports, cyclone warning information and alert advisories would be more effective if all pertinent weather reports will come directly and immediately from local Pagasa stations and other concerned agencies.

Under the planned setup, Nilo added, all disaster mitigation and hazard warning preparedness would be best and accurately disseminated to the local folk.

The problem at present is that, in all cases it's the central office that makes the analysis of all data and the final forecasts, he noted.

"So we just hope that starting next year and if there's enough budget, we would like our stations in the regions and provinces to do all the necessary monitoring and forecasting job in coordination with its partners like the Phivolcs, Office of the Civil Defense, DOST and even the tri-media to directly inform the affected people at the soonest possible time," Nilo said.

Alan Pineda, Pagasa Information and Communication Technology head, said that Pagasa will tap the SMS (short messaging service) by February next year for immediate response and advisory.

"We're just waiting for the final go-signal of both Globe and Smart if everything is ready for downloading photos, geologic maps indicating the distance and the direction of the typhoon, and other advisories through text or SMS. In that way, everyone can have an access to these information," he said. *Gil Francis G. Arevalo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Robin Padilla uncle held for slay rap, terror links

By Luige A. del Puerto

AN UNCLE OF ACTION STAR Robin Padilla has been arrested on charges of murder and illegal possession of explosives apparently in connection with a group of Islamic converts which the military and police claim to be a terrorist organization.

Police said Virgilio Cariño, 51, was nabbed by intelligence agents at the Greenhills Shopping Center in San Juan last Saturday and was transferred yesterday to the Philippine National Police headquarters at Camp Crame after spending two nights at the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Although arrested on the strength of a warrant issued last June by a court in Capas, Tarlac, in connection with a murder case, Chief Supt. Ismael Rafanan said Cariño had been linked to the Rajah Soliman Revolutionary Movement, which is also known as the Rajah Soliman group or RSG.

He said no bail was recommended for Cariño, a brother of Robin Padilla's mother, Eva.

Rafanan said a warrant issued by a court in Camiling, Tarlac, against Cariño in 2002 was still outstanding and "considered served" following his arrest last Saturday. This warrant involved a case of illegal possession of explosives and firearms in which Cariño's co-accused were members of the RSG.

Charged with Carino, identified as "Muslim Carino" in the 2002 warrant, were Tyrone "Dawud" del Rosario Santos and Angelo "Khalil" Trinidad (aka Calib Trinidad). Santos, allegedly a key leader of the RSG, is out on bail while Trinidad, along with two others, has been sentenced to death by injection for the February 14, 2005 bombings.

The police were cautious, however, not to label Cariño as a terror suspect and Rafanan would only say that he was once linked to the RSG. Neither did police give details on the murder charge.

Early this year, the police claimed that the RSG planned to conduct a wave of bombings in Metro Manila. They claimed to have seized 600 kilos of explosives that the RSG allegedly planned to use in the bombings.

Rafanan also clarified that Padilla had nothing to do with Cariño's cases.

"I want to make clear that Robin is very helpful trying to convince his Muslim brothers to adhere to law and order. Robin is not in any way connected to any unlawful organization... It just so happened that a relative of his was the subject of a valid warrant," said Rafanan, head of the Philippine National Police-Intelligence Group.

Padilla tried but failed to see his uncle yesterday morning. At press time, Cariño's wife, Marcelina, still had to see her husband.

Marcelina Cariño said her husband was not a terrorist nor a member of any terroristic organization.

"We don't even know this supposed Rajah Soliman (Movement) group," she said.

"I hope the authorities inform us where he is. We don't know where to find him," she added, her voice shaking.

ConCom proposal to scrap 2007 elections draws heavy fire

By Juliet Labog-Javellana
and Norman Bordadora

AS EXPECTED, THE PROPOSAL by the Consultative Commission to scrap the 2007 elections thereby extending the terms of elective officials drew stiff opposition in the Senate.

Senate President Franklin Drilon called on Malacañang to junk the recommendation contained in the draft amendments submitted by the 55-member ConCom to President Macapagal-Arroyo last week.

The President was to turn over the ConCom recommendations to the House and the Senate. The ConCom was chaired by former University of the Philippines president Jose Abueva.

"The recommendation of the Abueva commission to do away with the 2007 elections validates our fears that political self-interests will get in the way of legitimate amendments to the Constitution," Drilon said in a press conference.

"We challenge Malacañang to dissociate itself from this recommendation because [it] is basically immoral for Congress to favor [it] and it is undisguised bribery (of lawmakers)," Drilon said.

Drilon said the reason he and other senators were for a Constitutional convention of elected delegates to amend the 1987 Constitution was the conflict of interest issue on the part of senators and congressmen who would sit in a constituent assembly to propose amendments.

"There is no better example than this proposal to do away with the 2007 election because it will benefit congressmen and senators [that] the same must be rejected outright," Drilon said.

He said another unacceptable provision was the one making Ms Arroyo both the head of state and the government during the transition period to a parliamentary system from 2007 to 2010.

The lawyers' group Counsel for the Defense of Liberties had observed that the ConCom's proposals would give President Arroyo more powers.

In a legal paper, Codal, composed of law professors and experts, said the ConCom's proposal that President Arroyo serve as both President and Prime Minister during the transition period was "a recipe for dictatorship."

"The most immediate and major political impact of the Constitution as proposed by the House of Representatives and the (ConCom) is not found in the shift to a parliamentary system, but rather in its provisions granting President Arroyo dual powers to control the parliament as both President and Prime Minister," said lawyer Neri Colmenares in a legal memorandum prepared for the group.

"President Arroyo, who is being asked to resign by many Filipinos, will ironically have additional powers under the proposed Constitution," Colmenares said.

Malacañang, meanwhile, chose to put a positive spin to the opposition posed by a minority in the ConCom to the proposal to postpone the 2007 elections.

Palace officials yesterday said this only showed the ConCom deliberations of the past two-and-a-half months were democratic and were not influenced by Malacañang.

"The dissenting opinion from a minority within the ConCom is a clear manifestation of full democratic deliberations and refutes all insinuations that the commissioners were handpicked to serve the interest of the President or the administration," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said.

Presidential political adviser Gabriel Claudio said the "polarity of views is a healthy sign and to be expected from deliberations."

Twenty ConCom members signed a position paper seeking to exclude the no-election in 2007 proposal from the body's recommendations on Charter change.

The group said the people would not accept the proposal because they would see it as a from of bribery of officials whose terms of office would be extended in exchange for supporting the Charter change initiative of President Arroyo. *With Christine O. Avendaño*

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HBC BAGS PRA'S OUTSTANDING RETAILER AWARD

2005 Outstanding Filipino Retailers

HBC President - Ms. Susan M. Loyola
Chairman & CEO - Dra. Roselinda A. Hortaleza

The Philippine Retailers Association (PRA) recently awarded HBC Home of Beauty Exclusives as this year's. Outstanding Filipino Retailer at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. PRA, in cooperation with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), holds this prestigious event yearly to acknowledge the country's retailers who have exemplified the ideal, successful retailer in terms of growth and ethical practice, while encouraging them to embrace world-class standards and practices to become globally competitive.

As the leading personal care retail shop in the Philippines, HBC serves the Filipino through over 150 stores nationwide. Aggressively, it expands its network to fulfill its commitment to become a consumers' haven for affordable yet high quality, exclusive beauty products and services.

As such, HBC boasts of unique and world-class products and services catering to every Filipino taste. At present, HBC's house brands include: San San Cosmetics, Body Recipe, Hortaleza, M.D., Hortaleza Professionals, Allue "My First...", OHM Overall Hygiene for Men, Just Bug Cologne and Scents Line, Vitasoft Baby Care Line, Hygienix, Herbal Fresh, Essentials Salon Tools, Implements Professional Tools Line, Exclusiv PRO Salon Equipment and Home Exclusives. Truly "Tatak exclusibo. Iba tayo."

And this is just the beginning. HBC continues to explore new means of providing and improving its exclusive services for consumers as it carries on its flight to become the leading and innovative Filipino world-class retailer of health and personal care products, not just in the Philippines but also in the world.

Now, more people can enjoy products and services of HBC Home of Beauty Exclusives at the following new branches: Market! Market, Ever Gotesco Commonwealth, SM Iloilo and Gateway Cubao. For a complete listing of branches and inquiries, call the HBC Home of Beauty Exclusives Customer Care Hotline at 984-3288 or 984-5555 loc. 228, or text 0918-9215520. You may also log on to www.hbc.com.ph, HBC's official website at for more details.

I FEAR NOT THE NIGHT BEFORE DAWN

(Statement on his arrest by Gen. Fortunato Abat)

I have been arrested. By order of a President whose legitimacy is clouded in doubts, and carried out by one who acts and talks like he has forgotten he is not a fascist but one charged to champion law and justice.

Why have I been arrested? Because I dared to heed the longing cry of 85 million Filipinos for a man who would lead them out of the tyranny of corruption and deceit and incompetence of the present Administration.

I am an old soldier. I have served my country for over 50 years. As a teenaged guerilla fighter, as a soldier who fought in the jungles of Mindanao, as leader of the nation's army, as ambassador, as a peacemaker tasked with bringing the torch of peace and reconciliation to our Muslim brothers. And if it means anything at all, I lost a soldier- son in the field of battle, a loss I grieved deeply and in silence consoled alone by the thought that my son gave up his life for a worthy cause.

After all the toils and sacrifices for the country that I have endured, I should now be living a life of peace and quiet. But I am not. Indeed I find it a shame that given the ills and misrule that bedevil our beloved country, none of our young generation of leaders would step forward and take the lead to do something.

I am now in my sunset years. Yet I dared to act in this hour of need of our country. Where are our youthful leaders? We of the old generation shed tears and blood to gain for our country honor, freedom and dignity. All the young to whom we have bequeathed these gifts are called upon to do is to stand in active vigilance that they may not be robbed of these gifts. But where are they?

Many of them stay in the sidelines unmindful of the plaintive plea of our people for a change, making sport of my age, jeering and ridiculing and pompously urging throwing me in jail and those others who out of genuine sense of patriotism have chosen to act.

But I have not given up all hope for our young. In time, goodness and love of country will again pulsate in their hearts. They will waken and act according to what their hearts dictate and not in the manner convenience or fear or the keepers of power unlawfully tell them to. In time.

The night is darkest before dawn. But come it will, the dawn.

Mabuhay ang Pilipinas!

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

PCGG now open to deal on P130-B coconut levy fund

By Alcuin Papa

THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION on Good Government admitted yesterday it was open to a compromise agreement on the multibillion-peso coconut levy fund between its claimants – the nation's coconut farmers and businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco.

But PCGG chair Camilo Sabio said the agency, which exists to recover the ill-gotten wealth of the Marcoses and their cronies, would look favorably on a compromise only if the farmers agreed to the deal.

"We are vigorously pursuing the case but we would allow a compromise between parties. Whether there is going to be a compromise deal or not depends on the farmers," Sabio said at a press conference yesterday at PCGG headquarters in Pasig City.

Sabio said the coconut farmers were currently being consulted on the matter by a bishop-*ulama* group headed by Bishop Fernando Capalla.

Otherwise, Sabio said, the resolution of the case could take longer than expected. "We cannot predict how long the litigation will last. This could be resolved beyond our lifetime. So some people have suggested, why not a compromise? I think the parties will not wait for the cases," he said.

He pointed out a compromise "is encouraged by law" and the Supreme Court had given its approval to six other deals with Marcos cronies. "The point is to spare [everyone from] unnecessary litigation. And we are open to what the law says," he said.

Talk of a compromise agreement on the estimated P130-billion coconut levy fund surfaced recently when the government appointed new nominees to the board of the sequestered United Coconut Planters Bank (UCPB). Militant farmers had claimed the appointment of the new nominees was a prelude to a compromise deal between the government and Cojuangco.

The government has staked a claim to the majority shares of UPCB which, along with other companies affiliated with the Coconut Industry Investment Fund (CIIF), was said to have been bought by Cojuangco using coco levy funds. UCPB also administers the coco levy fund.

Sabio's statement was a departure from PCGG policy during the term of its late chair Haydee Yorac, who was perceived as aggressive in trying to recover the coco levy funds for the farmers.

But in one of her last press conferences before resigning from the PCGG, Yorac said a resolution to the coco levy fund ownership question was near, awaiting only the final decision of the Supreme Court.

Sabio, however, said that on Nov. 16, 2005, the high court's Second Division deferred its final judgment on the coco levy case pending the outcome of other cases surrounding it in the Sandiganbayan antigraft court.

The high tribunal also said the "characterization" of the coco levy fund as "prima facie public funds imbued with public interest" was only a "preliminary finding for the purpose of determining whether" the PCGG could vote the sequestered UCPB shares.

Yorac passed away in September after an illness.

A FILIPINO migrant worker performs at a rally against WTO in Hong Kong Sunday night. Hundreds of Filipino activists were at the forefront of the protests during the conference of the controversial international trade group in Hong Kong. EDWIN BACASMAS

Group of 90 developing nations wins first round in WTO 'battle'

By Michael Lim Ubac

A GROUP OF 90 DEVELOPING countries, including the Philippines, has won the first round in the recently concluded 6th World Trade Organization ministerial conference in Hong Kong but a bigger battle awaits next year.

At a press conference yesterday in the House of Representatives, Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Teddy Casiño commended the country's negotiators led by trade and agriculture officials for advancing the interest of Filipinos.

"Basically, we were able to buy time to push back the implementation of a new agreement," said Casiño who was with fellow Bayan Muna Rep. Rafael Mariano to join the official members of the country's WTO delegation.

They served as advisors to the official negotiating team, while party-list Reps. Satur Ocampo and Liza Maza acted as observers.

"But the question is: How long will the alliance hold? Will it hold until April 2006?" said Casiño who suggested that the short term solution was to seek moratorium on negotiations, or "explore the possibility of suspending previous commitments" while the global trade body was conducting a "comprehensive assessment of the impact of WTO policies on small, developing countries."

He explained that the country and the rest of the group succeeded on a last-minute deal on Sunday to "buy time" by "watering down" the agreement, particularly on Annex C which was originally drafted to speed up liberalization of the service sector so that many developed countries could cash in on the boom in that sector.

Only 25% know RP is WTO member

TWENTY-FIVE PERCENT OF FILIPINOS KNOW THAT THE PHILIPPINES IS A member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) while 75 percent are unaware of the country's WTO membership, according to a Fourth Quarter 2005 Social Weather Survey conducted by the Social Weather Stations.

· Of the 25 percent who are aware of the country's WTO membership, 13 per cent feel it has been good for the country, 4.2 percent feel it has been bad for the country, while 5.2 percent feel that it has been neither good nor bad.

·Of the 75 percent who are unaware of the country's membership, 61 percent have never heard of WTO, 14 percent know of the WTO but think that the Philippines is not a member.

· On the question of whether the Philippines should join the WTO, the same 75 percent consists of 42 percent who are neutral about it and 18 percent who say it would be good, while 10 percent say it would not be good.

The Fourth Quarter 2005 Social Weather Survey was done during the period Nov. 27, 2005 to Dec. 4, 2005 using face-to-face interviews of 1,200 adults with sampling error margins of ±3 percent for national percentages and ±6 percent for area percentages.

US court jails Fil-Am smuggling arms to RP

A US COURT HAS SENTENCED A Philippine-born New Yorker to 40 months in prison for trafficking arms and weapons parts in Mindanao, a US Embassy spokesman in Manila said on Monday.

The Philippines, battling Muslim and communist insurgencies, is a former US colony and a major security ally of Washington in the region.

Matthew Lussenhop, the US embassy spokesman, said a federal court in White Plains, New York, convicted Fernando Sero on Dec. 15 for violating the US Arms Export Control law by sending weapons to Mindanao in 2003 and 2005.

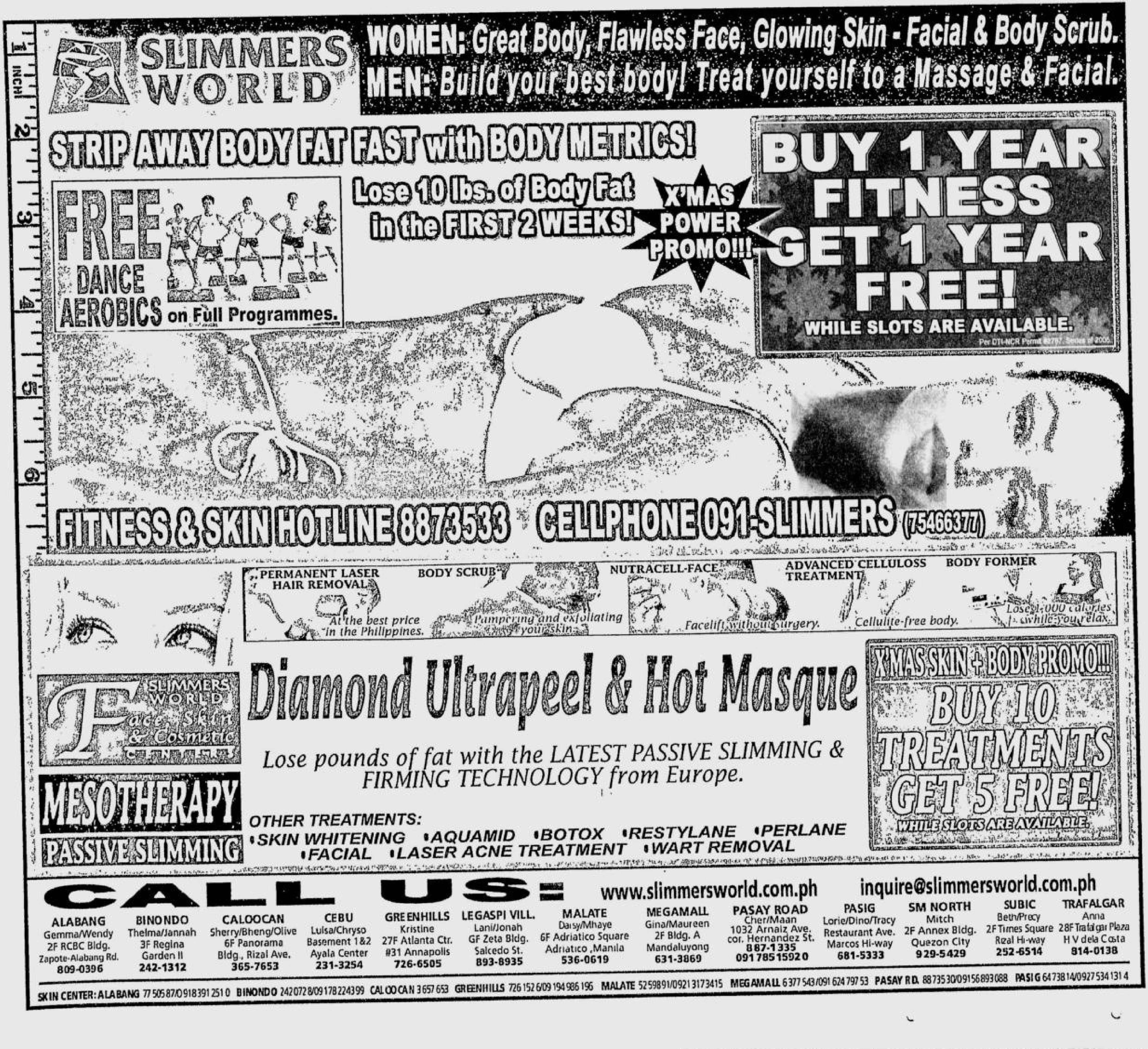
"Sero purchased the weapons in the United States and then smuggled them to Mindanao in sealed containers by falsifying shipping documents," he said, citing court records.

Sero illegally shipped items classified as "defence articles" under the US law to the Philippines on numerous occasions over a three-year period until March 2005, Lussenhop said.

Philippine authorities, with assistance from US security and law enforcement agencies, intercepted Sero's shipments four times since 2003, seizing assault rifles such as AK-47s, M-16s and HK-94s, as well as weapons parts and ammunition, he said.

Sero hid the weapons in sealed boxes containing items like light fixtures and electric car coolers. When the arms arrived in Mindanao, they were reassembled and sold, Lussenhop added.

He could not say whether the weapons were sold to Muslim separatists or communist rebels. The insurgencies have killed more than 160,000 people in the last 40 years and slowed rural development in the Philippines. *Reuters*



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Pick Davide successor, lawmakers urge GMA

By Philip C. Tubeza

ADMINISTRATION LAWMAKers have urged President Macapagal-Arroyo to name immediately the successor of Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr., who retired yesterday.

In a statement, Lakas-CMD Representatives Marcelino Libanan, vice chair of the House committee on justice, and Isidoro Real, vice chair of the committee on good government, called on the President to name Davide's replacement, noting that all the three contenders for the post were "highly qualified."

Libanan said Senior Associate Justice Reynato Puno and Justices Artemio Panganiban and Leonardo Quisumbing were all "certainly fit" to head the Supreme Court and the whole judiciary because of their "solid track records."

"They all have impressive qualifications and sterling performances to speak of, but the President has to pick only one candidate to succeed Chief Justice Davide. We urge the people to respect her decision," Libanan said.

He lauded Davide for "a job well done and for leaving a legacy of impartiality, independence and transparency."

"He will be remembered for his Action Program for Judicial Reform which has become a model for other countries," Libanan said.

Real urged the President to put premium on experience, performance and vision in choosing Davide's successor.

The Zamboanga del Sur congressman said he hoped that the next Chief Justice would surmount the numerous challenges ahead, including the unclogging of court dockets, the quick resolution of cases to decongest the country's jails, and cutting the number of vacancies among judges.

Real said he wished Davide well on his retirement. The public will miss "his fairness and probity which earned him everyone's respect," he said.

"The few controversies against Davide are not enough to obscure his good record. He was firm in his vision of a judiciary that is independent, effective and efficient, and worthy of public trust and confidence," he said.

End feuds, Davide asks pols as farewell present

From page A1

they, most of the time, are the hapless victims of our quarrels and our vendetta," he said.

Davide's retirement comes amid the continuing "Hello Garci" controversy that sparked the worst crisis in Ms Arroyo's 4-year-old presidency. Aquino is in the forefront of a campaign to unseat Ms Arroyo, who escaped an impeachment attempt in September over allegations triggered by the wiretapping scandal that she stole last year's election.

Also in the crowd were Vice President Noli de Castro, Senate President Franklin Drilon, Sen. Joker Arroyo, Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez, Solicitor General Alfredo Benipayo and former National Economic Development Authority (Neda) chief Winnie Monsod.

Addressing the employees of the high court for the last time during the morning flag ceremony, Davide said he was now turning his full attention to his wife Virginia and 11 grandchildren.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo greets retiring Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. upon her arrival at the Supreme Court.

LYN RILLON

Computerization program

"You know, I spent more time with the court than Mrs. Davide. She prepares my breakfast, a very simple breakfast, as early as 5 o'clock in the morning. So there you are, Gigi, I'll be back to you," Davide said.

Although his seven-year watch was known more for its judicial reform, Davide initiated a major computerization program in a bid to protect children from the trauma of a court appearance.

In a recent speech where he spelled out the state of the judiciary under him, Davide said he had "installed tele-video conferencing facilities in selected family courts."

"This allows 'vulnerable witnesses,' such as young children who are victims of sexual abuse, to testify in a special room inside a court filled with toys and other pleasant objects. In this way, the vulnerable witnesses are spared the trauma of testifying in a courtroom filled with adults, including the accused, while narrating their experience at the hands of the accused," he said.

"The computerization of our courts nationwide may now be considered complete," he said. The judicial system had only 295 computer units in 1998. It now has 3,768 computers.

Electronic library

He said 750 more computers were set for acquisition.

"The next step would be to interconnect all these computers in a large network called Wide Area Network (WAN) to facilitate communication and exchange of documents between the various courts all over the archipelago," he said.

According to Davide, a pilot project in Metro Manila now linked 400 justices and judges via the DSL Internet.

Through this network, the judges can access information via the court's website or transmit information to court personnel by e-mail or through the text messaging system.

"Eventually, through this network, the judges will be able to access the latest decisions of the Supreme Court published in the Electronic Library System, which is now in place," he said.

Other accomplishments

Under the high court's Action Program for Judicial Reforms, Davide pursued projects that included raising the standards of law schools, improving the bar examinations, ensuring a rigid selection and timely appointment of competent magistrates, enhancing their continuing intellectual and ethical education, increasing their compensation and retirement benefits, strictly enforcing the disciplinary process, and imposing sanctions more consistently for violations of the Code of Judicial Conduct.

The program has earned praise, as well as criticism.

Biggest crisis

"We had enough of controversies. But that's only because the court is proactive and we had the courage to defend the independence of the court from partisan politics," Davide said.

His biggest crisis came in 2003 when some members of Congress tried unsuccessfully to have him impeached for the alleged questionable use of the Judiciary Development Fund.

Davide served the high court for 14 years, following his appointment on Jan. 24, 1991. He was named Chief Justice on Nov. 30, 1998.

Before entering the judiciary, he had served as an assemblyman in the Interim Batasang Pambansa (1978-84) and chair of the Commission on Elections (1988-90).

He was a delegate to the 1971 Constitutional Convention and was named one of the 50 commissioners to the 1986 Constitutional Commission that rewrote the 1973 Charter of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

The high point of his career came when he presided over the impeachment trial of then President Joseph Estrada in 2000.

Mike A takes SEAG champs to Disneyland

From page A1

one of them a chartered flight—to celebrate in the magical kingdom of Mickey Mouse, Peter Pan and Tarzan the country's feat of winning the overall Games championship for the first time ever.

Arroyo said the treat was financed by private sponsors and his friends who wanted to reward the athletes for propelling the Philippines to the top of the Games' gold medal chart.

Airport officials, who had been previously reprimanded by their superiors for talking to media about the movements of members of the First Family, declined to release the full list of contingent members. But some 200 gold medalists were believed among those bound for Disneyland.

Each athlete reportedly received $300 pocket money.

Of the 337 holiday makers, officials at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport said 142 left on Philippine Airlines flight PR 300 at 8 a.m. They included 80 athletes, Arroyo, his son Rep. Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo and the latter's family.

32 media people

Eighteen others left via PR 306.

The officials said 177, comprising athletes and officials, flew on a chartered Cebu Pacific flight at 7 a.m.

The President's daughter Luli and youngest son Dato were expected to follow to Hong Kong today via PR 318.

One pre-departure list obtained by the INQUIRER showed the names of Philippine Sports Commission sports director Michael Keon, former Manila Congressman Harry Angping, and the First Gentleman's spokesperson, Jesus Santos.

Thirty-two media men were included on the trip, according to the list.

Some of the journalists were the ones who covered the First Gentleman at the height of the 2003 "Jose Pidal" scandal involving opposition accusations that President Macapagal-Arroyo's husband had deposited election campaign contributions in an account under the pseudonym Jose Pidal. Arroyo denied the accusations.

Also on the list were former Manila International Airport Authority chief Edgardo Manda and his family, Arroyo chief of staff Juris Soliman and businessman Ernest Escaler.

The airport officials said that Manda, his family and Soliman left via PAL on Sunday but Escaler was a "no show."

The revellers are expected to be back on Dec. 21 and 22. Members of the First Family are expected to return on Dec. 22.

The Philippines won 113 gold medals in the SEA Games, 26 more than Thailand.

"We are so happy," Rubilen Amit, a gold medal-winning billiards player, told ABS-CBN, referring to the trip. "At last all our efforts really paid off, especially after the Philippines became No. 1."

Irony of it all

The irony of the trip was not lost on the disabled Filipino athletes who competed in the 3rd Asean Para Games that will wind up today. *(See related story in Sports, Page A17.)*

"I hope they enjoy their trip. The athletes deserve it because they worked hard to win," weightlifter Adeline Dumapong told the INQUIRER.

Dumapong, a 32-year-old athlete restricted to a wheelchair since childhood, said he hoped the disabled Filipino athletes would also get the same attention from the First Gentleman.

They gave their best, too

"I hope the First Gentleman will offer an incentive of any kind to our medalists with disabilities," Dumapong said.

He said the situation of the disabled athletes was "heartbreaking," adding that participants in the Para Games had practically been ignored despite having given their best in their respective sporting events.

Thailand has virtually cinched the overall title in the Para Games.

Wycoco dies

From page A1

yesterday at Manila Doctors Hospital, doctors said. He was 59.

His death came a month after he suffered a massive stroke and slipped into a deep coma shortly after presiding over a meeting in his office.

Dr. Dante Morales, hospital director and Wycoco's attending physician, told reporters that his patient's heart "basically stopped" after his blood pressure fluctuated.

"*Wala nang nag-supply na blood sa utak niya kaya siya naging brain-dead* (No more blood was flowing to his brain so he became brain-dead)," Morales said.

"*Nag-swell ang utak niya, tapos naipit sa spine kasi bumabagsak yung brain 'pag ganun ang nangyari* (His brain swelled and it was squeezed by his spine because the brain slips when that happens)."

Eulogies pour in

He said doctors could not pinpoint the specific cause of death.

Morales said Wycoco had been suffering from bouts of pneumonia since he was attached to a respirator after he plunged into coma.

Eulogies immediately poured in for Wycoco.

A friend, a Filipino

"We have lost a good man and a true professional," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said. "He brought winds of change to the NBI. We hope that his successor will continue his good work."

President Macapagal-Arroyo's adviser for political affairs Gabriel Claudio described Wycoco as "a friend and a Filipino."

Wife, children at his side

"I'm deeply saddened by his passing. I have no doubt many of our countrymen feel the same profound sense of loss," Claudio said. "His record and reputation as a dedicated law enforcer, an honest public official and a true gentleman will be very difficult to match, replace or forget."

Wycoco's wife Lucila and children Patricia, Voltaire, Mico and Vladimir were at his bedside when he died, his doctors said.

The remains of the NBI director will be brought to Funeraria Paz in Quezon City for the wake.

Wycoco suffered a severe stroke caused by a ruptured blood vessel in the brain and slipped into a "deep coma" on Nov. 23.

Morales explained that the blood vessel leading to the patient's brain was blocked, causing it to burst. He added that Wycoco's aneurysm was congenital.

Morales also said the patient had a medical history of fluctuating blood pressure.

Class '68

Wycoco was the fourth NBI chief—after Antonio Aragon, Santiago Toledo and Federico Opinion—to die while in office.

Prior to his appointment as bureau director on Jan. 23, 2001, Wycoco was the Philippine National Police's second in command as deputy director general, the military's equivalent to a 3-star general.

After his graduation from the Philippine Military Academy in 1968, Wycoco was designated PNP Regional Director for Region I, then Director for Police Community Relations, Defense Attache in the United Kingdom, Armed Forces of the Philippines Command and General Staff College instructor, and AFP and PNP spokesperson. *With reports from Christine O. Avendaño and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

Aunor not in drug rehab, lawyers say

From page A1

Lawyers Claire Espina and Sherwin Edelberg did concede that these options were being considered seriously to resolve their client's case.

The two lawyers spoke in a phone interview with the INQUIRER to clarify a Reuters news agency report that Aunor had asked to enter a drug diversion program to clear the charge against her.

Reuters had quoted US prosecutors as the basis for its report last weekend.

It said Aunor had sought permission from the judge to enter the one-year program which calls for a judge to dismiss the charges "if a defendant fulfills certain requirements, which typically include substance abuse treatment."

The report also quoted a spokesperson for the Los Angeles County District Attorney as saying the DA had "agreed to allow her (Aunor) to go into drug diversion."

Three programs

California generally has three diversion programs, eligibility for which are set by statute, Espina said.

"If a defendant meets the eligibility requirements based upon the statute, the defendant can voluntarily avail [oneself] of the programs. A defendant does not need to ask for 'permission' in the manner that the DA (district attorney) has to 'approve' the defendant's entry into any of the programs," Espina said.

Role of DA

According to Aunor's lawyers, there is an eligibility screening process but that DA permission is not required for a person to avail oneself of the programs.

They further explained that the DA spokesperson's use of the term "allowed" was a misrepresentation of the role of the DA with respect to these statutes.

Espina and Edelberg said that, technically, even the judge could not refuse an eligible defendant from participation in these programs. To do so would be a denial of the procedural and substantive due process, and the equal protection of the law, they said.

Decision soon

The judge, however, can remove a defendant from the program if the defendant fails to abide by its terms and conditions.

"We are actively seeking resolution of Aunor's case and anticipate a decision will be made in the near future," Espina said.

"Ms Aunor, in the meantime, is asking the media and her fans that she be accorded the time and privacy to enable her to seriously consider our recommendations."

Espina also clarified that the use of the words "sought permission" should not be translated in Filipino as "begging" but "requesting."

Aunor's next hearing is scheduled for Dec. 22 at the LA Airport Courthouse.

Correction

IN YESTERDAY'S issue, a commentary by Eugenia Duran-Apostol on Page A15 of the Opinion section—"Education Revolution"—misstated the title of a project conceptualized by the Department of Education, the Supreme Court and the Lawyers' League for Liberty. The project is called Public Education on the Rule of Law Advancement and Support (Perlas)—not Public Education on the Rule of Law. The same commentary misspelled the name of the program director. His name is Roberto Eugenio Cadiz—not Cadit.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City, fax Nos. 897-47-93/94; e-mail address: daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

SHARON AP

Israel's Sharon recovering after minor stroke

JERUSALEM—PRIME MINISTER ARIEL Sharon's condition improved on Monday after he was hospitalized overnight for a minor stroke that raised questions about how long he could dominate Israeli politics.

The hefty 77-year-old former general, battling for reelection after pulling Jewish settlers from the Gaza Strip and remaking Israel's political landscape, was rushed to hospital on Sunday and stayed overnight for tests.

"I am fine. I guess I should have taken a few days off," Sharon told Israeli media overnight after his stroke. "There are people who are already interested in a replacement? Well, maybe it's too soon. I'm still here, no?"

The head of Sharon's office said on Monday that the prime minister was able to walk around and joke and might make a statement later on Monday.

"There was a big improvement in his condition," said Ilan Cohen. "As soon as there is reliable medical information, you'll receive it immediately."

Sharon has been a central figure in shaping the Middle East for decades.

His role has never been more critical than after pulling settlers from the occupied Gaza Strip this year and quitting his right-wing Likud party to form a new movement with a promise to pursue peacemaking with Palestinians.

General elections are due in March.

"The public will certainly wonder whether Sharon will be able to maintain his abilities," wrote Aluf Benn in the left-leaning Haaretz newspaper.

Aides rushed to assure Israelis that Sharon was in no danger and that there was no need for even a temporary transfer of his powers. Sharon is very much a one-man show and his exit from the scene would inevitably mean a major upheaval.

Sharon's illness overshadowed Monday's vote to succeed him in what remains of his Likud party, now trailing at third place in the polls behind Sharon's new Kadima movement and leftist Labour.

Surveys of Likud voters give an edge in the leadership battle to former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Sharon's old rival who resigned as finance minister in protest at the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip after 38 years of occupation. *Reuters*

S. Korea panel seizes computer of cloning pioneer

SEOUL—A SOUTH KOREAN UNIVERSITY HAS seized the computer of an embattled stem cell scientist and will release the initial findings this week of a probe into whether his team actually made tailored stem cells, it said on Monday.

Scientist Hwang Woo-suk, who faces charges from collaborators that key parts of their landmark May 2005 paper on producing patient-specific stem cells were fabricated, has defended the veracity of the research.

Seoul National University said in a statement that a nine-member investigation committee started its probe into the findings of Hwang's team over the weekend.

The committee sealed off Hwang's office, collected material from his lab at the university and interviewed 24 team members.

"We placed a video camera over the stem cell cultivation office so that we can have 24-hour surveillance of those who enter and leave," the statement said.

The committee will perform DNA analysis on embryonic stem cells produced by the team to see if they match patients.

University officials have said a briefing on the investigation is planned for Friday.

Hwang, who was questioned by the investigation committee over the weekend, has said he expects results by Dec. 26 on testing of five sets of stem cells that were part of his original study. *Reuters*

Bush declares US winning Iraq war as violence flares

BAGHDAD—AT LEAST FIVE PEOPLE WERE KILLED AND 11 wounded Monday in Baghdad, just hours after US President George W. Bush said his country was "winning the war" in Iraq.

Meanwhile, as vote counting continued following last week's general elections, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier announced that German archaeologist Susanne Osthoff, who had been held hostage in Iraq for over three weeks, had been released and was in relatively "good health."

In the latest round of violence, gunmen wounded Baghdad's deputy governor, Ziyad Tarek al-Zubai, and killed three of his bodyguards in an ambush on his convoy in the south of the capital. A civilian and another bodyguard were also hurt, an interior ministry official said.

And in a second attack, a car bomb killed two civilians and wounded eight people, including three policemen, in an attack on a police colonel.

Col. Salam Aalag Zahal, police chief in the capital's southern district of Dura, was driving to work when the bomb exploded. Both he and two bodyguards were hurt.

On Sunday, at least 17 people were killed as US Vice President Dick Cheney visited Iraq for the first time since the 2003 US-led invasion.

Speaking of Thursday's general elections, to elect a four-year term parliament, Cheney, a chief architect of the invasion to oust Saddam Hussein, hailed the poll as a "major milestone" on the road to democracy.

Bush, speaking a few hours later, urged a divided US public not to give in to "defeatism" from critics of his strategy, declaring: "We are winning the war."

"There is more testing and sacrifice before us," he said in his first televised address to the nation from the Oval Office since the March 2003 invasion.

Bush predicted progress over the coming year in training Iraq's fledgling security forces and fighting corruption and said that "as these achievements come, it should require fewer American troops to accomplish our mission."

Much of the president's speech focused on the growing chorus of calls for a firm timetable for a US withdrawal, something he has rejected and equated to admitting defeat in the face of a deadly insurgency.

The unrelenting violence "proves that the war is difficult, it does not mean that we are losing," he said in the fifth and final speech in a public relations offensive aimed at shoring up support for the war.

"Not only can we win the war in Iraq, we are winning the war in Iraq," he said.

Speaking of the election, Bush said it did not signify the end of violence, but marked "the beginning of something new: constitutional democracy at the heart of the Middle East."

Some 70 percent of the electorate turned out to vote for the first full-term parliament since the fall of Saddam Hussein in April 2003.

Scores of electoral officials have been working around the clock then to tabulate election results, while the electoral commission warned that preliminary indications released by political parties should be "taken with the upmost caution."

On Sunday, Vice President Adel Abdel Mahdi said his United Iraqi Alliance, a Shiite-backed coalition, was "close" to winning an absolute majority of the 138 parliamentary seats. *AFP*

ELIICA
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FASTEST ELECTRIC CAR

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi rides on the eight-wheeled electric car "Eliica," developed by researchers at Keio University, at the premier's official residence in Tokyo, Dec. 19. The car, which uses lithium-ion battery as a power source, has a top speed of 370 kph. AFP

American beef returns to Japan

TOKYO—RELEASED FROM A TWO-YEAR-long ban over mad cow fears, American beef headed back to Japanese grills on Monday, with the imported meat set to appear at a popular barbecue chain and a private banquet put on by US producers.

The planned feasts followed a barrage of limited shipments over the weekend triggered by the Japanese government's long-awaited decision last week to ease the embargo on US beef imposed in December 2003.

The fete on Monday heralds the return of American beef to what once was its most lucrative overseas market. US producers sold some US$1.4 billion (euro1.17 billion) in beef to Japan in 2003, and supporters were eager to woo Japanese palates once again.

"We want to show them that our Nebraska beef processing firms ... are able to meet their import regulations," said Greg Ibach, director of the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, which was hosting a banquet later Monday at a Tokyo restaurant.

Ibach and his delegation got a small shipment of ribeye and tenderloin through customs over the weekend for private use at the banquet—for a select group of importers and companies with links to Nebraska—and at the US Embassy in Tokyo.

He said producers back home were eager to get meat back onto Japanese plates: Nebraska had been the state with the largest share of the Japanese market for American beef, exporting between US$150 million (euro125.18 million) and US$300 million (euro250.35 million) a year.

The wider Japanese public was to get its first mouthful at the Zenshoku Korean barbecue chain. American beef was to debut in 30 restaurants in the area in western Japan on Monday, and then return to 26 outlets in Tokyo and other parts of eastern Japan on Tuesday.

"The public might not easily accept American beef, but we respect the opinions of a minority, and we welcome those who choose US beef," said Hiroyuki Toriyama, spokesperson for the chain, which includes restaurants called "Yakiniku-den" and other names.

"The past image of American beef as tasty meat is deeply rooted," he said.

It was expected to be weeks or even months, however, before Japanese shoppers at supermarkets or diners at popular and cheap beef-and-rice bowl outlets savor their first tastes.

Yoshinoya, a favorite beef bowl chain, is also concerned that remaining restrictions on US imports will limit the meat's availability.

Monday's American beef debut caps a long voyage back to the Japanese market. *AP*

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Cheney says spying on Americans is legal

WASHINGTON—US VICE PRESIDENT DICK Cheney on Sunday said President George W. Bush's secret order to allow spying on people in the United States was legal and necessary to prevent terrorism, but lawmakers from both parties called for Congress to investigate.

In an interview with ABC's "Nightline," Cheney said the president acted within his constitutional authority as commander in chief and that the program was under constant legal review.

"It is a program that is, by every effort we've been able to make, consistent with the statutes and with the law. It's the kind of capability if we'd had before 9/11 might have led us to be able to prevent 9/11," Cheney said in a transcript released on Sunday.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, speaking on "Fox News Sunday," said disclosure of the eavesdropping could jeopardize terrorism investigations.

"The more we get the exposure of these very sensitive programs, the more it undermines our ability to follow terrorists, to know about their activities," she said.

Rice said Bush used his authority so "people could not communicate inside the United States about terrorist activity with people outside the United States, leaving us vulnerable to terrorist attack."

After initially refusing to comment on a New York Times report on the covert program, Bush said Saturday that after the Sept. 11 attacks, he had authorized the National Security Agency "to intercept the international communications of people with known links to al-Qaida and related terrorist organizations."

Rice reiterated Bush's statement that the wiretapping of telephone conversations and other communications was legal and did not violate the US Constitution.

A 1978 law, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, makes it illegal to spy on US citizens in the United States without court approval.

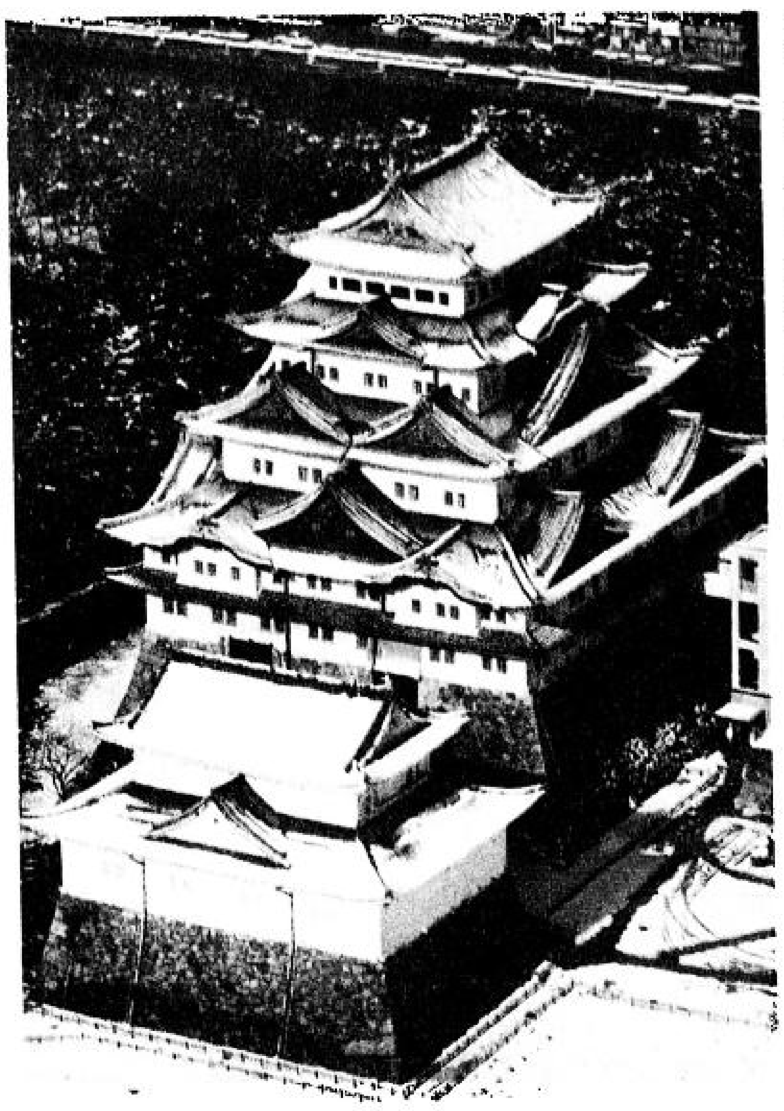
On NBC's "Meet the Press," Rice said the program was carefully controlled, with a limited scope focusing only on those believed to have links to al-Qaida terrorists.

Cheney told ABC, "It has been reviewed repeatedly by the Justice Department every single time it's been renewed, to make certain that it is, in fact, managed in a manner that's fully consistent with the Constitution and with our statutes."

Cheney said that a few members of Congress had been briefed on the program more than a dozen times.

However, Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid disputed the administration's contention that members of Congress had been informed.

Reid was one of several lawmakers of both parties who have backed a planned hearing on the issue by Senate Judiciary Committee Chair Arlen Specter, a Pennsylvania Republican. *Reuters*



HEAVIEST SNOWFALL
The roofs of the Nagoya Castle in central Japan are covered with fresh snow Dec. 19 as the country's fourth largest city, Nagoya, recorded the heaviest snowfall in 58 years since 1947. AP

S. Korea gov't apologizes for protester's death

SEOUL—SOUTH KOREA'S GOVERNMENT apologized Monday for the death of a farmer who was beaten by police during a protest rally against trade liberalization.

Hong Deok-pyo, 68, died early Sunday, 33 days after he was hospitalized. Activists said he was hit on the head and neck by police shields.

"We pray for his soul and express grief and condolence to his family," Prime Minister Lee Hae-chan said in a statement.

"The government sincerely apologizes," Lee said, vowing to conduct a probe and punish police involved in the beating.

Hong was the fourth farmer who has died since violent protests erupted in early November. A 44-year-old farmer died on Nov. 25 after being beaten by police. Two farmers have also committed suicide.

The Korea Peasants' League said farmers would hold memorial services and anti-government rallies commemorating Hong's death in Seoul and elsewhere.

Meanwhile, Vice Foreign Minister Lee Kyu-hyung left for Hong Kong to try to obtain the early release of South Korean farmers detained during anti-globalization protests.

South Korean police and foreign ministry officials said 1,001 South Koreans were detained Saturday protesting against World Trade Organization talks in the most violent scenes the southern Chinese territory has seen in years.

They said 850 remained in detention.

Hong Kong police said 97 people, including 39 police officers, were injured in the clashes. *AFP*

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Time people of the year

NEW YORK—TIME magazine on Sunday named rock star and debt relief activist Bono, and Bill and Melinda Gates, who have committed billions of dollars to international health causes, as their 2005 "Persons of the Year."

The magazine hailed the work of one of the world's best known rockers and the world's wealthiest man and his wife to help developing countries and fight the scourge of AIDS.

"Bono charmed and bullied and morally blackmailed the leaders of the world's richest countries into forgiving $40 billion in debt owed by the poorest," the magazine said in its edition to be released Monday.

Time praised the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which has a $29-billion war chest, for "giving more money away faster than anyone ever has" in 2005.

The Gates Foundation has become the world's biggest charity and provides vital funds for AIDS programs and vaccinations against tuberculosis, malaria and other diseases that are killing millions in the Third World each year.

"For being shrewd about doing good, for rewiring politics and re-engineering justice, for making mercy smarter and hope strategic and then daring the rest of us to follow, Bill and Melinda Gates and Bono are Time's Persons of the Year," Time editor-at-large Nancy Gibbs said.

The choice was made in a year that has seen an almost unprecedented amount of international aid given after the tsunami disaster in Asia, the South Asian earthquake and even the hurricanes that hit the southern United States.

Former US presidents Bill Clinton and the elder George Bush were named as "partners of the year" for their international efforts to raise money for reconstruction after the devastating tsunami that crossed the Indian Ocean on Dec. 26 last year. *AFP*

Ex-coca leaf farmer is new Bolivia president

MORALES REUTERS

LA PAZ, BOLIVIA—EVO MORALES, a leftist former coca leaf farmer vowing to be a "nightmare for the US," was poised to become Bolivia's first indigenous president on Sunday after likely clinching one of the biggest electoral victories in the country's history.

Morales appeared certain to take office in January when his rivals conceded defeat and results tabulated by local media showed him garnering slightly more than 50 percent of the vote, much higher than predicted.

"Beginning tomorrow Bolivia's new history really begins, a history where we will seek equality, justice, equity, peace and social justice," Morales told hundreds of supporters amid chants of "Evo President! Evo President!" at his campaign headquarters in the central city of Cochabamba.

A high-school dropout who herded llamas as a boy, Morales has vowed to nationalize Bolivia's natural gas industry and roll back a US-backed eradication program of coca, a key ingredient used to make cocaine but also prized by Indians for traditional medicinal uses.

Washington considers Morales an enemy in its anti-drug fight in Bolivia, the third biggest cocaine producer after Colombia and Peru. His critics fear a Morales government could jeopardize the country's flow of multimillion-dollar economic aid from Washington.

Morales often invoked racial imagery on his campaign, feeding hopes among the impoverished Indian majority that one of its own could help reverse what most saw as more than 500 years of discrimination under leaders of European descent, which began with slavery in Spanish colonial silver mines.

Preliminary official results were expected to be released on Monday. Should Morales gain more than 50 percent of the vote he would avoid having to face a congressional choice between him and his leading rival, rightist Jorge "Tuto" Quiroga.

Quiroga, a US-educated engineer who served as president from 2001-2002, had vowed to keep Bolivia on a free-market path and implement US coca eradication policies. Most of the country's coca leaves are processed into cocaine.

"There will be an end to hatred and xenophobia that we have suffered historically," said Morales, who said he was surprised at the historic outcome.

A Morales presidency will add Bolivia to a regionwide drift to the left that has seen leftist presidents come to power in Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Support for Morales, a 46-year-old lawmaker who admires Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, was also lifted by popular disillusionment with Bolivia's free-market economic policies, which many Bolivians say have done little to help many in South America's poorest country.

"Evo is a real man of the people. He's with us," said Estela Martinez, a homemaker celebrating in Cochabamba.

Morales will face tough challenges. Large-scale street demonstrations over economic policies, natural gas resources, greater autonomy for the provinces and Indian rights have toppled two presidents in the last three years.

Results showed Morales' Movement Toward Socialism party was just one seat shy of control in the lower house of Congress—and without control of the Senate.

An Aymara Indian, Morales first rose to power as the leader of the country's coca farmers, heading sometimes violent confrontations against Bolivian troops cooperating with the US to destroy coca crops. *Reuters*

Indonesia boy dies of bird flu; WHO sounds alarm

JAKARTA, INDONESIA—LOCAL tests showed that an 8-year-old boy died of bird flu in Indonesia, officials said Monday, amid warnings that the sprawling archipelago could be a flash point for a human pandemic.

Health Ministry official Hariadi Wibisono said the World Health Organization had yet to confirm that the child, who died last week in the capital Jakarta, had the disease.

It was not immediately clear if the boy had come into contact with sick birds, he added, though veterinary officials said several birds in his densely populated neighborhood tested positive for the disease.

Bird flu has killed hundreds of millions of chickens and ducks since it started ravaging poultry stocks across Asia in 2003, and has jumped to humans, killing at least 71, most in Vietnam and Thailand.

But Indonesia's caseload is steadily rising.

A WHO-affiliated laboratory in Hong Kong has confirmed nine human deaths and is awaiting results for the boy and a 39-year-old man who also died last week.

David Nabarro, the UN coordinator for bird flu, said there was no sign of human-to-human transmission in Indonesia.

But with its high density of birds and humans, the Southeast Asian nation could later turn out to be the source of a pandemic, he and others warn, and steps need to be taken now to prepare.

Most human infections have been traced back to contact with sick birds, but health experts fear the current virus could mutate into a form that is easily spread among people.

"We are very worried it could happen (in Indonesia)," Nabarro said, as he wrapped up a two-day visit. "The size and complexity of the country make challenges very, very large." *AP*

UK school reform plan hit

LONDON—EDUCATION SECRETARY Ruth Kelly will defend government plans to reform schools on Monday to a select committee of MPs, a day after Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott questioned if they were necessary.

In a newspaper interview on Sunday, Prescott said he was not convinced major reform was required and said the old 11-plus exam system had produced a "first class/second-class" system which should not be revived.

"I fear this (education white paper) is a framework that may do the same," he told the Sunday Telegraph. "I'm somewhat critical."

The new education bill would free schools from local authority control, giving them power over their budgets and offering parents a greater say in their management.

Critics say the proposals would pit one school against another and give them too much say over admission qualifications, creating elitist institutions and benefiting the middle classes most.

Prescott had been a staunch ally of Blair and his comments could galvanize opposition to the planned laws, already opposed by many in Blair's ruling Labour party.

Minister Douglas Alexander said on Sunday the government could water down the plans to win support and said better proposals would emerge from consultations.

"It is important we listen to people," he said.

Embarrassingly for Blair, his plans may get through parliament with Conservative support.

Kelly and Schools Minister Jacqui Smith will appear before the education select committee, which is taking evidence on the schools white paper. *Reuters*

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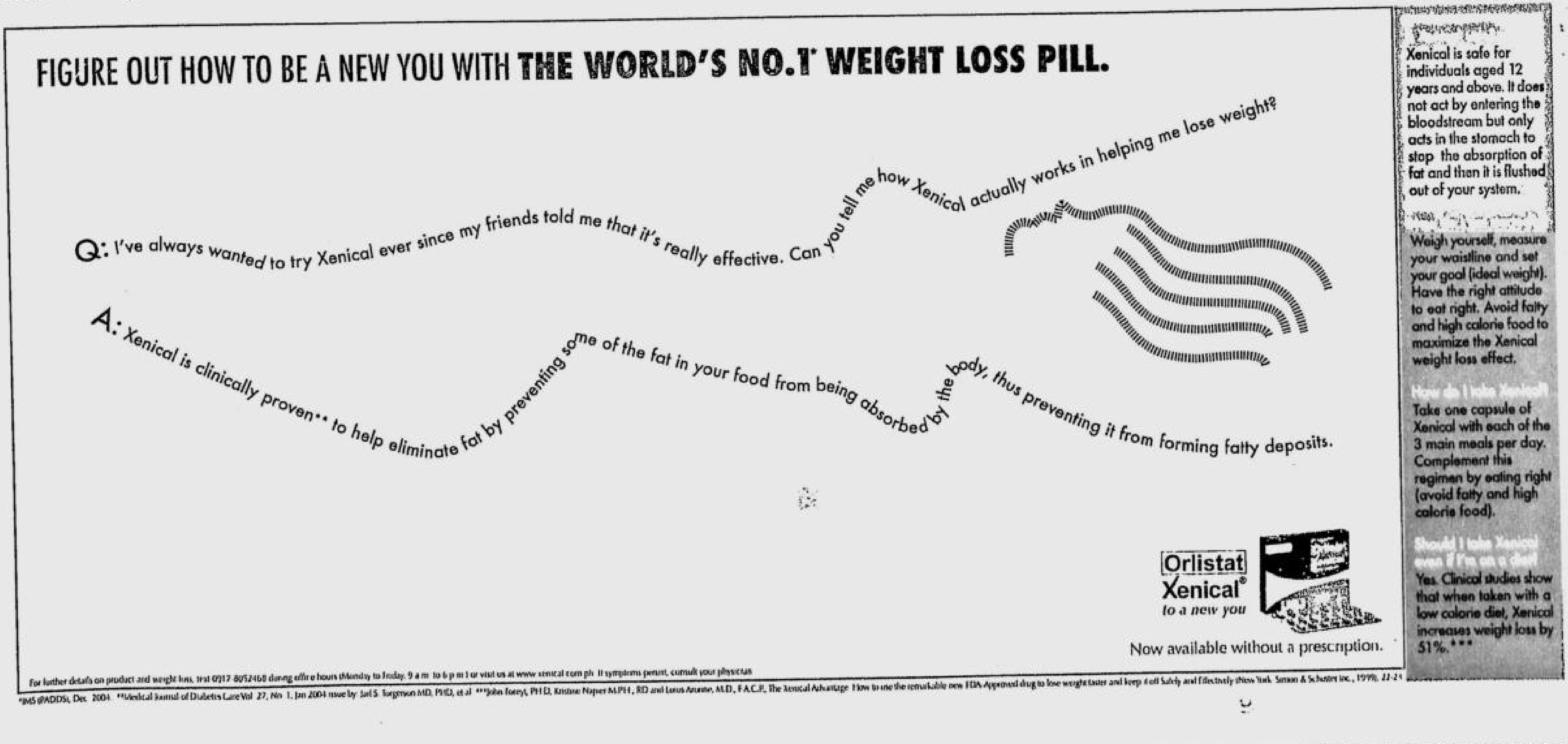
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*IMS (PADDS), Dec. 2004 **Medical Journal of Diabetes Care Vol 27, No 1, Jan 2004 issue by Jarl S. Torgerson MD, PHD, et al ***John Foreyt, PH D, Kristine Napier M.P.H., RD and Louis Aronne, M.D., F.A.C.P., The Xenical Advantage: How to use the remarkable new FDA-Approved drug to lose weight faster and keep it off Safely and Effectively (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1999), 22-21

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OPINION

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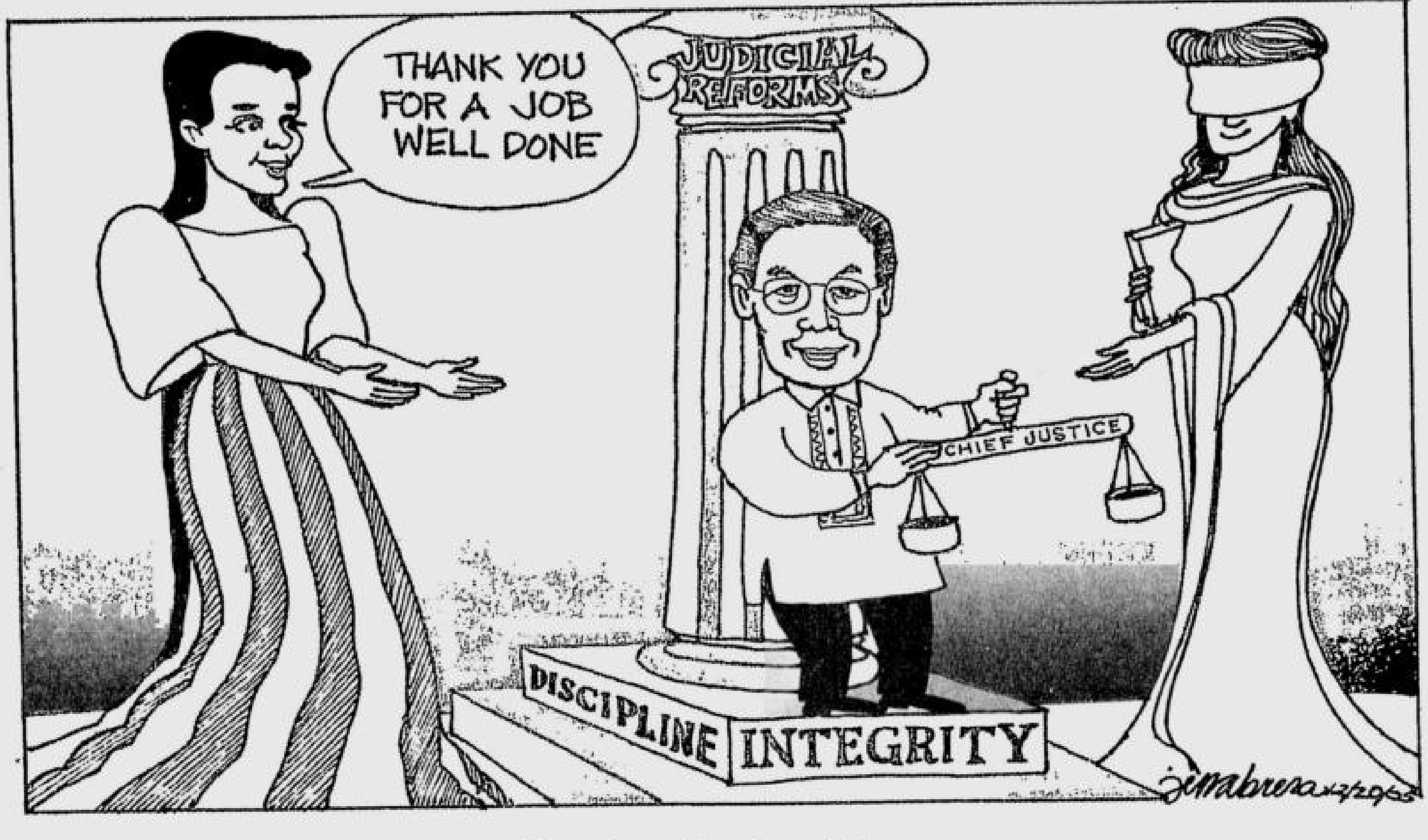

Bonifacio and Estrada

EDITORIAL

LAST WEEK A DISTINGUISHED HISTORIAN, DR. Zeus Salazar, launched the first of his two-volume biography, "Pangulong Erap." It is a chronicle of a leader from the upper middle class aligning himself with the masses. Salazar said Estrada fell from power because the elite would not have anything to do with a leader who represents the lower classes.

"It is the same elite that never countenanced the likes of Andres Bonifacio, founder of the Katipunan, who was eventually murdered by the very same group that withdrew participation from the initial salvo of the Philippine Revolution in Pinaglabanan," Salazar said.

The historian sees a similarity between the fates suffered by Bonifacio and Estrada. Bonifacio was sentenced to die by the leadership of the Katipunan that was taken over by members of the elite during the revolution against Spain in the 1890s. The official version of Bonifacio's death, given by Maj. Lazaro Makapagal, his executioner, was that after he read the order of execution to Bonifacio, the latter begged for his life, ran to the woods but was eventually found and shot to death.

Estrada, while he fell from the presidency, did not suffer a similar bloody and fatal end. But his collapse was figuratively violent. Members of the upper classes, the civil society and the youth converged on Edsa to demand his departure from Malacañang.

There are many similarities between Bonifacio and Estrada, but there are also many dissimilarities. Bonifacio was truly a man whose heart was with the masses, and who was with the masses. He grew up in poverty and knew what it meant to be poor. Estrada grew up in an upper middle class milieu and never knew what it was to be poor. His lifestyle and tastes were certainly upper class. But he adopted a rhetoric that endeared him to the poor, and most of his roles in the movies made them identify with him.

Bonifacio had two wives. His first wife, a neighbor from Palomar named Monica, died of leprosy. His second wife was Gregoria de Jesus, a beautiful girl of 18 from Caloocan. Gregoria later became a member of the women's chapter of the Katipunan and took the code name Lakambini.

Estrada has one wife and several mistresses. His mistresses were one of the factors that led to his undoing. When he was already president, he lost no time building luxurious mansions for them. One mansion even had a swimming area that featured white sand imported from world-famous Boracay beach. The mansions became the subject of many investigative reports that asked where Estrada got the money for their construction.

Bonifacio was a studious, determined and disciplined leader. He was, as President Diosdado Macapagal said, "a blending of youth and maturity," "a dynamic leader who would be able to unite [the people] in the struggle against the evils of colonialism." He applied himself constantly to his mission, which was to win independence for his nation.

Estrada, after an impressive beginning as President, soon went downhill. His closest advisers themselves told of evenings—and early mornings—spent in carousing, drinking and gambling in the company of women and his "midnight cabinet." There were many occasions when Estrada was apparently suffering from a hangover and lack of sleep and could not attend to important state functions, such as the raising of the flag on Rizal Day. Was this the way to act for the highest official of the land, the man who should set an example for the rest of the nation?

There is no account of Bonifacio taking advantage of his position of leadership to enrich himself. He was accustomed to the ways of the poor, and he lived a frugal, spartan life. Estrada is now facing a charge of plunder for allegedly having appropriated millions in government funds for himself and his family. It is also alleged that he used the powers of the presidency to give financial favors to his cronies and friends.

Bonifacio and Estrada suffered similar fates because the elite could not accept the idea of a man of the masses leading them. In the case of Bonifacio, it was really a man of the lower classes who sought to lead them in their fight for independence. In the case of Estrada, it was a man crossing over to a social class that he was not born into, announcing that he would work for the improvement of the lot of the masses, and then actually doing very little along this line afterwards.

With his charisma, emotional intelligence and professed love for the masses, Estrada could have been a good president. But the tragedy is that his actions did not suit his words.

Shriveled cities

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

ARMED CONFLICTS HAVE FUELED A LITTLE-noticed diaspora of Muslim Filipinos and reduced a thriving Mindanao city, where people of various faiths once lived harmoniously, into a bitter "ground zero" for insurgents.

Today, "from one-fifth to one-third" of major ethnic groups, like the Maranao, Maguindanao, Tausug, Yakan and Iranon, "live in areas outside their ancestral homelands," notes Philippine Human Development Report 2005.

Many drift into "virtual Muslim ghettoes" in mainstream settlements such as Metro Manila, Tanay and Baguio, the United Nations-sponsored study reports.

Routinely shut out from better jobs, migrants are made scapegoats for crimes in host communities. "A particular source of resentment lies in the insensitivity of majority Filipinos to cultural needs of forced Muslim migrants," PHDR observes.

Muslims bury their dead within 24 hours as a religious obligation. "For Muslims, in a distant place with no burial site for themselves, like Baguio, it is a nightmare when somebody dies. They have to bring the corpse down to Laoag or Manila." This drains the relatives of the dead.

The exodus has spilled abroad. Many work as illegals in Sabah, "exposed to harassment, crackdowns and deportation."

Marawi City reflects this tragedy, PHDR states. From the genteel "Dansalan," explored by Spaniards in 1689, the place evolved into a bustling and peaceful commercial center. Its traders attracted businessmen from Cebu, Manila and beyond.

In 1956, the Lanao del Sur capital was renamed as "Marawi"—after the "ravi" or reclining lilies at the Agus River. It's now the only chartered city with a predominantly Muslim population.

Primarily because of Mindanao State University, around 34 percent of Marawi's residents are college graduates. That's much higher than any other Mindanao city. The Philippine average is only about 13 percent.

Accounts by non-Muslims, Chinese and other foreigners, reveal that relatively harmonious relations prevailed in Marawi, Yasmin Busran-Lao and other PHDR researchers found.

"We called the *'hilot'* who helped our mother, during her deliveries as *'ina'*—the Maranao term for mother," an interview respondent recalls. "Our families exchanged bowls of soup during meal times.

"Our playmates and classmates were all Maranaos...and we went caroling during Christmas to both Christian and Maranao homes. During Ramadan, we fasted. We were not conscious of these two occasions as exclusive religious practices...The same excitement was in the air during Valentine's Day."

The onslaught by lowland vigilantes known as "Ilagas" shattered that world. Damage spread with the October 1972 Muslim National Liberation Front-led uprising.

"All those years of being so close together suddenly turned to mistrust and hatred...Our Maranao friends told us we had to leave for our own safety. Things were no longer normal."

Both Muslims and Christians were traumatized by the conflict of the 1970s and subsequent "all out wars." Muslims hid Christian friends from rebels. And Christians spirited Muslim friends from vigilantes.

"When the Marawi Uprising broke, *para lang protektahan yung mga* Christian friends *namin*, my brother-in-law hid them...In many Christian areas, mga Muslim friends *nila* saved them from the Ilaga and armed elements," a Maranao respondent said.

"Now in their 40s or 50s, children in the 1970s conflict still break down in tears when asked to recount the incidents," PHDR notes. Trauma from recent "all-out war" is no less severe. The generation that lived in peace has now been replaced by a generation that knew nothing but conflict.

Vigilantes and rebellion "sucked the soul of the area," PHDR notes. This marked the beginning of the "decay and death" of Marawi.

Once a "stunning, vibrant melting pot of diverse cultural communities in Mindanao, Marawi 'never quite recovered.' One contemplates a city with the best-educated population of all Muslim cities but with paradoxically the worst standards of living."

Life expectancy in Lanao del Sur, for example, is 58 years—almost 24 years shorter than that of 72 set by Cebu, Batangas or Pampanga. The city's 80 manufacturing enterprises are dwarfed by Davao's 740. Its nine pawnshops and banks appear puny beside Cagayan de Oro's 169. Marawi's revenues of P4.98 million are overshadowed by Iligan's P220.8 million and Zamboanga's P435.4 million.

"One of the world's 15 ancient lakes," the 34-square kilometer Lake Lanao today is severely depleted, notes the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization.

About 28 percent of fish in Marawi's markets today come from elsewhere: from Sultan Kudarat to Zamboanga del Sur. An additional 43 percent are netted in Iligan Bay and surrounding seas. Premium priced species like carps have disappeared. In their place "trash fish" are sold.

The Moro insurgency is undeniably based on real grievances, PHDR says. Its extortionate costs signal that the Filipino majority can refuse to confront the roots of the conflict "only on pain of putting their own security and way of life at risk."

The insurgent message, today—stoked by Al Qaida and other radicals—is, armed rebellion, even terror, is needed to attain a separate Moro or Islamic republic. "That alone can deliver minimum levels of human development for neglected communities."

Only reforms that hew to democratic principles of equity, fairness and justice, can blunt that message—and prevent future shriveled cities.

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Wisdom

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THE MORE I LOOK AT IT, THE MORE I FIND that the Christmas story has much to say to us today. That story of course is about salvation, the birth of the messiah come to deliver us from a life of pain, wickedness and suffering. But it has no lack of lessons to impart as well to a nation looking for deliverance from a life of pain, wickedness and suffering.

The one thing that continues to fascinate me is the character of the Three Kings. I don't know if Melchor, Gaspar and Baltazar lived more in myth rather than history—I must have been absent as well when they taught that at Religion class—but their participation in the story is the one thing that holds the greatest magic for me.

That a beggar-looking couple, the woman heavy with child, should be turned away by inns and respectable homes comes scarcely as a surprise. If a displaced couple from a war-ravaged part of the country should turn up at your door and beg not just for temporary shelter from the rains but to have their child delivered in your threshold, would you let them in? But that three kings should journey for miles just to seek out that couple and have no doubt in their minds they are in the presence of truth, goodness and grace at beholding the couple's child—that is the true miracle. Can you imagine three Cabinet secretaries or three senators or congressmen trekking to a hovel in Payatas in the dead of night in the rain, just to gift a family there with part of their budget or Countryside Development Funds? If that should happen, the only miracle would be if they did not have a single TV camera in tow.

What all this says to a nation desperate to be delivered from its plight is that, first off, you've got to have the eyes to separate grain from chaff, reality from illusion, truth from lie. If that's the case, then the good news is that we're not entirely lost. We at least know where the source of our salvation does not lie, even if we're not so sure where it does. You have a survey that says GMA's approval rating remains at its lowest since May despite a startling recovery by the peso and an even more startling surge to victory at the SEA Games, then you still have a public that isn't so easily snowed by appearances. Either that public believes these things were accomplished in spite of, rather than because of, the phantom upstairs, or it believes that these things are deceptive, the product of artificial circumstances or cheating.

We still have a star to guide us, we're just too lazy to take the arduous trek to follow it, preferring to hibernate in the dead of winter.

But where exactly the source of salvation does lie is the tricky part. The Christmas story offers as many paths there as there are Christians willing to espy them and take them. Among them, as the Three Kings suggest, you want salvation, personal or national, material or spiritual, you won't find it by looking up, you'll find it by looking down. You won't find it by looking at queens and politicians, you'll find it by looking at poets and philosophers. You won't find it by looking at pelf and power, you'll find by looking at humility and simplicity.

I myself take my cue from the rather incongruous and completely sublime image of kings kneeling down before a pauper child. For some of course, many of them to be found among Filipinos, all that means is that you can always buy your way to heaven with gold, frankincense and myrrh. On a personal note, it means that you donate land to the Church—the friars' favorite form of extortion—and you expunge a life of raping, pillaging and murdering. On a national note, it means that you hire expensive lawyers to show why it is right for Gudanic men to be prevented from talking and Garcillanic ones to be allowed to lie through their teeth, and you expunge a record of lying, cheating and stealing.

But for most people—and I'd like to think they are still to be found plentifully among Filipinos—what that scene really signifies is that the spiritual is more powerful than the material, the moral is more powerful than the political, truth is more powerful than expedience. In the divine order of things, kings bow down before the Child, not the other way around.

Many years ago, I found a truly inspired agenda for national recovery, or salvation. No, I did not find it in the writings of the NDF, the RAM, or any of the organizations with unpronounceable acronyms that abound in this country. I found it in the white paper done, if I'm not mistaken, by UP-based economists. This was shortly after the first Edsa, and everyone was busy looking for ways to push the country to heaven after the hell of martial law. The white paper had many suggestions, but the first item on its agenda, its No. 1 priority for national recovery, was: Restore human rights.

Of course, many of the people who wrote it have forgotten all about it, and may now be found asking us to forget that GMA cheated in the elections, let's move forward, the task of economic recovery awaits. But they thought differently then. They argued that the one thing Marcos picked clean from us wasn't our money, it was our spirit. It wasn't our body, it was our soul. It wasn't our sense of rich and poor, it was our sense of right and wrong. We do not recover morally, they said, we will never recover economically.

If that isn't divinely inspired, I don't know what is. You can argue its wisdom with all sorts of treatises. But I prefer to appreciate it in all its beauty in the miraculous sight of the Three Kings bowing down before the Child (and not the Child groveling before the Queen). There is no surer path to recovery, in the best possible sense of recovering all that is human in us. There is no surer path to salvation.

Ever wonder why we call them Wise Men?

No-el runs into controversy

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

THE INK ON THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION submitted by the 55-member Constitutional Commission has hardly dried but the document has already kicked up some controversy. The two controversial aspects are: its upholding of GMA's term up to 2010 and the cancellation of the 2007 elections, which is seen to benefit senators due for reelection, all the members of the House, and all local officials. The first has to do with the expectation in some quarters that GMA's term would be shortened to 2007, to provide her a "graceful exit" as a compromise to accommodate the calls for her resignation. Among the noisiest objectors are senators with unmistakable presidential aspirations, who can't wait to see her ousted. The reaction from the Senate is totally predictable.

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On the second controversial aspect, elective officials would only be too happy to have their terms extended by three years, without having to spend and campaign anymore. For this reason, all local government officials' organizations are squarely behind this proposal. The problem is that this proposal is also difficult to sell to the people. It gives the perception that incumbent officials are being "bribed" to support Charter-change (ConCom chair Jose Abueva prefers to call it "incentive").

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What makes the No-El proposal objectionable to some people is that there's this rule of Congress that says its members cannot legislate anything that would directly benefit them. Out of delicadeza, Congress members, therefore, cannot come out openly for No-El, no matter how they love it. Secretly, they will do support it.

But the President's case is different. However her critics feel about her legitimacy in office, her term is up to 2010; hence, she's really not affected by the ConCom's proposal. The ConCom, in fact, has been very kind to her by upholding her six-year term and retaining her as a "strong President" with jurisdiction over "an interim Prime Minister." These two roles would reverse only after 2010, when the President is reduced to a ceremonial status and the PM becomes a strong head of government. In view of these, it would be smart for the Palace to stay away from the No-El proposal and simply let the local officials campaign for it.

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ConCom members sought to explain the No-El scenario by saying they want to give the nation some respite from all the fratricidal political exercises, so that it could focus on moving the economy forward. Indeed, despite the initial protests over No-El, there are citizens who actually relish a moratorium on politics. They argue, for instance, how much less corruption there would be if the politicos don't have to raise campaign money. But the problem is that GMA's enemies won't allow this to happen. In training their guns on No-El, there's the danger that all the advantages offered by the proposed Constitution, such as the shift to a unicameral legislature—all far too important to our political growth—would be lost. Rather than imperil them, let's have the 2007 elections.

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Eyebrows were raised in the SEA Games when Joker Arroyo bagged a medal in the equestrian event. What, Joker Arroyo showing tremendous potential as an equestrienne? Actually, the 17-year-old rider is not the white-haired maverick of the Senate, but his youngest daughter, now in the 13th year of her international baccalaureate at the British School Manila. The female Joker, who began her education at the International Center for Beginning Beginners in Alabang, has consistently been British School's best student, vying with a local boy named Rafael Nite. She's said to be mulling Stanford University for her college degree.

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Few may know that Sen. Joker Arroyo is the proud father of very bright daughters. The eldest, Maoi Arroyo, after graduating with a Master's in BioScience Enterprise, a program developed by Cambridge University in the United Kingdom, and the Massachussets Institute of Technology in the United States, founded Hybridigm Consulting, the first biotechnology consulting firm here. It helps scientists commercialize their research, start their own companies and get investors. Its current client roster includes private equity investors from the UK, start-up biotech companies in Shanghai, and six existing local biotech entrepreneurs. Maoi is also lead consultant of the Export Development Council and DOST's biotech clustering initiative. She co-chairs the Natural Products Export Development group and is with the technology assessment panel and Technology Research and Development. She has scheduled the second annual Philippine Biotech Venture Summit this coming January. The summit will feature four prestigious US speakers and showcase creative investment opportunities in healthcare, agriculture and aquaculture in RP.

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Joker's second daughter, Baba Arroyo, began her career as an entrepreneur in college, when she started a small bazaar business selling home-made cookies. She shifted to creating mosaics for bowls, tables, frames, mirrors and even large murals, which were showcased at a successful exhibit in Palms Country Club, Alabang, in 2003. But Baba's real passion is early childhood development. She believes that children should be exposed to purposeful play and stimulation during their first year, instead of being left at home with the maids. Last April, she decided to set up a franchise of Gymboree Play & Music in Alabang's Westgate Center, where music, art and play programs for newborns to 5-year-olds are held within a happy, safe and fun environment. "Gymboree isn't just another place to deposit your child," says this multi-talented entrepreneur. "All our classes require parental participation, which is essential in developing confident, well-rounded kids."

A 'tiangge' review

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

FOR SOME REASON, THE CHRISTMAS SEASON has been delayed for the David household this year. Where in previous years our home would be in full Yuletide regalia soon after All Saints' Day, this year our home looks only half-dressed. The smaller tree has been minimally trimmed but still has no lights, while the other is still half-way to completion. A few of my *belen* collection are on display, but all, for some strange reason, are missing the figure of the baby Jesus. "Has a Jesus thief struck our home?" I asked my daughter, who has taken the Christmas décor as her personal responsibility. "No," she said, "it's just that Jesus is the smallest item in a *belen*, and so it's the easiest to lose."

I can pin the blame on the home renovations we undertook about this time last year, which entailed emptying our garage/store room. But I know that also partly to blame is this strange malaise that's come over me the past few months. My husband and children claim my mood is due to my current obsession with Korean *telenovelas*, but I know that the political climate also has a lot to do with it, a frame of mind I know the rest of the nation also shares.

Indeed, this year, the lights and public décor seem strangely dull and uninspired. About the only sign of Yuletide activity is the terrible traffic, especially in the Ortigas and Makati areas. The other week, I was on my way to two afternoon affairs, one at the Club Filipino and the other at the Edsa Shangri-la. My plan was to deliver my talk at the Club, before the Soroptimists, then make an early exit so I could deliver the closing remarks at the Neda (National Economic and Development Authority) media briefing on the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals). I made it to the Ortigas area at 2 p.m., but by 4 p.m., I still had to cross Edsa on my way to Greenhills. It had taken me two hours to negotiate the standstill traffic in the area!

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THE OTHER signs of holiday frenzy, though I don't know if you could actually call it "cheer," are the crowds at the various *tiangges* which, so reports say, are the only venues drawing shoppers for the Christmas season, disappointing mainstream retailers expecting the usual boost in sales that comes toward the close of the year.

Mall developers and department store owners point an accusing finger at "168," an air-conditioned shopping center in Divisoria filled with "gray market" stall owners, whose bargain prices for goods made in China have drawn shoppers looking for best value for the least money. Unfortunately, I have yet to pay a visit to "168," and friends tell me it's now "too late" to do my Christmas shopping there as it's invariably packed at any day of the week, any time of day.

This "*tiangge* review," then, will have to do without what is arguably the "mother of all *tiangges*," and will be concentrated mainly on the Greenhills-Ortigas area.

The Greenhills *tiangge* has already become an institution, and even friends and relatives from abroad know about it, though they usually come for the pearls and—for now—crystal and glass bead jewelry. What I do love most about Greenhills, though, is the sheer variety of the goods sold there, from antique furniture to cell phones, garments to leather goods, dried flowers to handicrafts. Attempts have been made to put some order into the chaos, with areas designated for specific items, but I much prefer the old set-up when you never quite knew what to expect as you elbowed your way into a narrow aisle.

Prices at Greenhills are a bit higher than, of course, at "168" or at the newer *tiangges*, but I find the items—especially the garments and leather ware—of better quality. You may also find some items in Greenhills that are relatively difficult to source, such as sachets of the sugar substitute "Splenda" which are available at P200 per bag of 100 sachets.

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I PAID my first visit to "Tiendesitas," a new "*tiangge*-village" development of Ortigas and Co., only last week, but I was quite charmed by the concept. "Tiendesitas" is composed of thatched-roof pavilions, each of which is devoted to a specific theme. So there's a pavilion for food, for garments, for toys and gift items, for antiques, and even for handicrafts.

The range of choices at "Tiendesitas" may not be as wide as in Greenhills, but the prices are a bit lower, especially for garments, with T-shirts going for P100-150 each. I like the selection of toys, as well as the handicraft, which range from artistic, unique pieces to "touristy" items.

Before we began shopping—rather, I shopped and the men in the family trailed me and grudgingly carried my bags—we decided to have dinner first at the food pavilion, which was so busy we had a hard time finding an empty table. There was a band playing and groups of beer drinkers made for a rather rowdy atmosphere, but this I think only added to the charm of the place.

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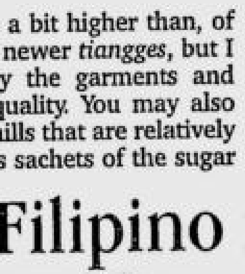
JUST this Sunday, I went for the first time to the St. Francis *tiangge*, just across from Megamall. This is a four-story building that, so one shopper told her companion, "is like shopping in Divisoria, only it's air-conditioned." Each floor is devoted to a certain type of product, but its real strength are garments, which range from fashionable women's wear, to jeans and jackets, to children's clothes. The overall quality of the clothes, however, leaves much to be desired. And being a shoe freak, I was quite disappointed at not finding a pair to my taste throughout the building.

While my daughter and I trolled through the narrow aisles, a chamber orchestra was playing both classic Christmas carols and local songs, certainly a perk one doesn't expect from a bargain mecca. And given the Christmas blues we're laboring under, perhaps gratitude for such small graces would not be out of place in this season.

Some notes on Filipino music

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper



FELIPE P. DE LEON, FATHER OF MY FRIEND JUN, was a music professor at St. Scholastica's conservatory of music and at the University of the Philippines.

We are so accustomed these days to hearing local compositions being played at concerts that it comes as a surprise to know that, before the war, such opuses were not featured in concerts beside the works of foreign masters. According to Professor De Leon, the Philippines then did not have a sizable enough body of music that could be called distinctly Filipino.

However, even then we never lacked for creative talent. Here are some pre-war compositions: Antonio Buenaventura's "Bagong Pagsilang," Hilarion Rubio's "The Elements," Lucio San Pedro's "Puente del Diablo" (which Professor De Leon describes as "weird" and "mysterious"), Juan Hernandez's "Mga Himig Sa Atin Kabundukan," Antonio Molina's grandiose "Trio in F Major," Francisco Buencamino's "Mga Himig Sa Aking Bayan," Nicanor Abelardo's "Panorama" and several *kundimans*, and Jose Estella's "La Tagal."

Many of our folk songs have been handed down from one generation to the next without any written records. Our folk songs usually consist of a melody with two to five notes played and sung simultaneously with a specific activity. Generally, most of these folk songs can still be heard among the non-Christian tribes in northern Luzon and Mindanao.

From the Bontoc Igorots, we have the *ayegkha*, their evening song or serenade; the *pagpag* (while pounding rice at wedding feasts); the *ayoweng* (while milling sugar cane); *annaoy* (while constructing rice terraces); the *panilan* (while harvesting honey from beehives) and the *kalusan* (during regattas). The lowland Filipinos definitely share a love for music with their upland cousins. The *Tagumpay* was sung in commemoration of tribal battles and when acclaiming the winner as chief of the village.

The Tingyans sang the *daleleng* at festivities. *Salagintok* was a song about friendship. The *Daklot* and *danyo* were religious songs.

The Ilongots had a song called *lagi* and *sambotani*, a tribal song performed in a shouting manner to the accompaniment of clapping.

It isn't surprising that we, Filipinos, who are known to be very fond of music, use songs as a medium to express our feelings even about work. *Diona* and *talindaw* are songs about home and labor; *indulanin* and *dulayin* are about rural life; the boat songs of the fishermen are called *rularanin* or *suliranin*; war songs are *dupayinin*; *hiliraw* and *balikungkung* are recreational songs. The following may not be familiar for most of us, unless you're enrolled at the UP Conservatory or some other music school. The *dalit*—one of the oldest forms—began as a prayer. It is described as having a mournful quality. It was usually sung as a prayer for the salvation of the soul of the dead. It could also be a love song.

The *tagulaylay* is pre-Spanish. Professor De Leon described it as lengthy melodic lamentation over a tragic event, similar to the *Pabasa* or reading of the Passion of Christ. *Hele-na* is a lullaby.

The *kumintang* is both a war song and a war dance; later it became a love song and a love dance. The *awit* is a descendant of the *kumintang*, which is usually plaintive and melancholy. The *kundiman* is our most typical love song. It developed from the *awit*. Some *kundimans*, however, were patriotic rather than romantic songs. The *balitaw* is a song and dance combination; that of the Tagalogs' is light and gay, while the Visayans' is a counterpart of the *kundiman*.

The *palimos* is a blind beggar's song; it has no permanent form. The *dansa* is patterned after the Spanish tango or *habanera*; it was used as a serenade. The *pandangguhan* or *pandanggo* is also a takeoff from the Spanish fandango; it is usually danced, not sung.

The pre-Spanish songs looked like they were going extinct; however, during the Japanese occupation, there appeared to be a cultural revival of folk songs.

With the revival, Professor De Leon felt that "Music can play a major role in our national reconstruction. A proper appreciation of it will open a wide vista of our rich Philippine landscape, and, eventually, will help us look into ourselves in times like the present." (That being the case, shouldn't the malls be playing some old-time compositions, like the *kundimans* for at least an hour a day?)

Professor De Leon thought of music as a powerful unifying force, a means toward the creation of a unified national sentiment and, at the same time, a factor in the establishment of a solid Filipino culture. He said there should be a campaign to popularize Philippine music in order for us to appreciate our own art. He believed Filipino music reflects our people's thoughts and desires. He advocated the holding of musical contests and called for more support for musicians. Not that he shunned foreign music or thought that it shouldn't be taught or heard in our land. He believed that aesthetic sensibilities can be sharpened by contact with the rest of the world. But he also believed that Filipinos should seek expression of their true nature through the fine arts. (And to think that these thoughts date 60 years back!)

(Philippine Review 1944).

Magic in a box

YOUNG BLOOD

Rosita Alyssa M. Baua

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

I COME FROM A FAMILY OF MIGRANTS. EVER SINCE I CAN remember, my relatives have been going abroad, leaving family behind to seek greener pastures. I remember receiving *pasalubong* of various kinds from time to time: M&Ms, Alyssa Ashley lotion, Suave shampoo, green Irish Spring soap, towels—you name it, we got it. They were all "stateside," treasured and saved to the last.

I recall the times when my *titas* grabbed my foot, put it over a piece of paper, and then traced a pencil around it. "There," they would say, "we can now be sure about your size!"

I remember hovering over *balikbayan* boxes with my relatives, scavenging for our own fortune. We would noisily grab things and claim them as our own and sometimes end up in a tug-of-war. Then we would exclaim in wonder and thanksgiving when we saw a new pair of Nike rubber shoes or Ray-Ban shades.

How excited we were as we searched for our *pasalubong*. We swore we could tell the "*amoy States*" that clung to towels and shirts sandwiched between items that were breakable.

These *balikbayan* boxes, the unmistakable trademark of the Filipino, have been our family's chest of treasures for as long as I can remember, connecting us to one another in a quaint, unexplainable, yet very real way. In a way, they have made present those who were absent and made tangible what could not be seen so that the line dividing presence and absence was lost somehow.

I remember these *balikbayan* boxes and endless goodbyes in airports because right before me now is one such box from the United States. But the *balikbayan*, my mother, is not here. She still cannot come home to visit us. She is still waiting for her green card.

It has been close to four years since she left us. Without any assurance that she would find work, she left armed only with a stubborn determination to support our growing needs, no matter what the cost or however it could be done.

Up to now, I am still amazed at her courage in leaving almost everything behind: her family, her work, her friends. For our comfort, she has willingly and without complaint endured countless, unspeakable pains. I cannot even begin to imagine without feeling tormented how many winter nights she had to walk the streets alone, how many minutes she had to wait in the bus stop, while the cold wind lashed her and seeped through her skin and bones. All for the love of us.

It has not been easy for us, her children, either. Without her we have had to take care of ourselves and watch out for one another, taking care to keep the love that keeps us close to one another strong and unshakable, day after difficult day. We have celebrated milestones without her. Birthday and graduation greetings have been said only through the telephone and greeting cards. Christmases have never been the same without her.

Ever since she left, I have not had the desire to decorate our home. The only object that reminds us that it is Christmas is the lantern she bought for my brother 11 or 12 years ago. The Christmas tree has not found its way again to our living room.

I guess I fear that any new memory would erase the old, and I cherish the old and long for it to come back. We have, in her absence, embraced one another in times of distress. Like the time when my sister and I held each other in tears one day before her graduation, both of us missing our mother so much. I kept thinking that she should have been the one to fix my sister's hair and make her over on that important day. I kept saying sorry to my sister for not being fully present to her like Mama would have been. It pained me to see my sister all ready for graduation, but without a mother to embrace her and tell her how proud she was of her.

Though I try my best to stand in the place of our mother, I know that I will never come close to being like her. She, who has always been so wise, who knows all the answers, who knows how to cruise through the line connecting love and discipline. She, who is so strong in faith and who always sees the hand of God and the promise of a beautiful tomorrow in everything. She, whose love is so great that she is always ready to give of herself, one time selling different things and not infrequently leaving her treasured jewelry in the pawnshops so we would have money for our needs.

No, I cannot and will never be like her. I know I falter because no matter how hard I try, there is just no replacing a mother in the lives of her children. Her arms that embrace us when we are weak. The glint of pride and joy in her eyes that sparkle when we do something good. The laughter that rings out as we tell her how our day has been, and the ears that possess a loving understanding and know the slightest break in our voice or a lull in our conversation are signals of our unspoken, hidden aches.

I wish I had her love, so wise and so unfailing, unlike mine that is imperfect. I have yet to learn how to discipline without being unjustly strict, how to let go of my siblings without being afraid nor untrusting of them, how to enforce rules with an iron will and yet not be hated, how to be sensitive to every beat of their hearts, to every sound in our home. How she does it, I have yet to learn. How she can so calmly face the storms of our lives and deal with them as her own, so courageously letting us go into a world she knows to be wild and cruel, trusting that we will make make it on our own and eventually come back home.

I am still filled with fear for my siblings as we begin to grow and go in different directions: I'm in my last year in school, my brother in his new role as a father and husband, and my sister on her way to being *dalaga*. Sometimes I stay up late at night worrying who will watch over them as they go along. Though I know I cannot, I wish to live their lives for them to make sure that they will live well. I feel helpless that all I can do is remind them and walk with them all the way, and beyond that, nothing more. This must be the pain of every parent—the pain of dying to oneself and letting go, constantly, eternally. Loving not until it hurts but even when it hurts.

It seems to me that our family is in eternal motion, and we all struggle to hold on to an anchor, the anchor of the love we have for one another, which gives us both the strength to die over and over again and the blessing of a new beginning, of giving birth to something beautiful.

I come from a family of migrants, who stay together even in the absence of some of its members, through *balikbayan* boxes filled with the fruits of love and sacrifice.

As I finish taking out the items from the *balikbayan* box that my mother sent, I remember her again and I am with her once more. I am truly amazed at how the miracle of love can take wings and turn brokenness into wholeness, absence into a pervading, tangible presence.

Like magic.

Rosita Alyssa M. Baua, 25, is a fourth year medical student.

The same elitist make-up

A PARLIAMENTARY FEDERAL SYSTEM will be the key to our progress as a nation, Prof. Jose Abueva, Consultative Commission chair, tells us. Let me cite some of the long festering problems which have stunted our country's growth and created a social volcano more fearsome than Mount Vesuvius. This volcano could explode anytime and trigger a social tsunami worse than the tsunami that hit South Asia in December 2004.

1. A P5-trillion public debt which burdens and mortgages the future of millions of Filipinos, including, sadly, those not yet born.

2. A perennial budget deficit, hovering between P150 billion and P200 billion, caused to a great extent by corruption and wasteful spending. It is said that about 25 percent of the annual budget is lost to corruption. A recent survey shows we are perceived as the third most corrupt country in Asia.

3. A forest cover of 18 percent from the 57 percent forest cover we had in 1934. This tells us how dangerously fast our forests are being denuded.

4. Continuing brain drain of trained and skilled Filipinos—doctors, nurses and teachers—which now adversely affects our health care and educational systems.

5. Unemployment problem. Records put the number of unemployed at 2.7 million and the underemployed at 6.6 million.

6. Creeping lawlessness. Peace and order continues to deteriorate every passing day.

7. Children who should be in schools are instead carrying guns as child soldiers in battlefields where Filipinos are at war with each other.

8. Growing hopelessness. A recent survey of Pulse Asia tells us that one in every three Filipinos wants to leave the country.

This short list of critical problems has indisputably caused retrogression in our country's development—crushing the hopes and dreams of disadvantaged and deprived Filipinos. And there are millions of them.

Abueva should tell us and the rest of the public how a parliamentary federal system will effectively deal with these problems, considering we have the same kind of ruling class in a society that is still elitist in make-up—the widening gap between the governed and those who govern, in terms of power (or powerlessness) resources and aspiration, the least of its concerns.

—EDMUNDO H. ESCALANTE,
past president,
IBP Sorsogon chapter,
Gubat, Sorsogon

GARCILLANO: safe in the embrace of supporters.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Garci admits association with him taints officials?

FORMER ELECTION COMMISSIONER Virgilio Garcillano named at least 37 persons who allegedly talked to him in the last election season. But he did not describe the nature or subject of their conversation. His intent, clearly, was to muddle the issue on the election fraud to which he and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo have been linked. By his "exposé" Garcillano seemed to say that mere association with his name is mire enough to taint a public figure's reputation—a slur he seems quite comfortable to live with and exploit.

The inordinate security arrangements for Garcillano are difficult to understand, unless it is meant as a warning to him not to step out of line in his testimony before the House investigation. Malacañang may have, in the seemingly scripted appearance of Garcillano, intended to convert the reopened House investigation into a deodorizing process for GMA, but it seems the plan has gone awry. Garcillano has clearly been self-contradictory in his testimony even as he was successful in leading his interrogators in circles; and even as he took cover under the sub-judice mantle provided by a trick case he filed with the Supreme Court (a shyster's ploy which hopefully the Supreme Court will shoot down—by resolving it promptly—while the investigation is still in progress).

Two witnesses (Garci's close assistant Michaelangelo Zuce and his military security officer, Capt. Marlon Mendoza) are outraged by Garcillano's performance and have volunteered to testify again to debunk his claims). Former NBI Deputy Director, Samuel Ong (custodian of the "mother tapes") has been sufficiently provoked such that he is now ready to come out and testify in spite of the alleged threats to his life. He is asking only that the warrants of his arrest on charges of sedition and kidnapping be lifted. He is at last responding to a dangerous call of patriotic duty, and the least the Senate can do is afford him every protection from the hounds of an administration gone berserk. Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez is not likely to lift the arrest warrants as he is not particularly interested in hearing what Ong has to reveal. The PNP is not lifting a finger to favor Ong with a fraction of the protection they are providing Garcillano.

If we are not seeing a closure to the GMA-Garci affair, we might be seeing the prelude to GMA's exit from Malacañang.

—E.P. DAKANAY JR.,
43 Baltazar St., Philamlife Village,
Parañaque City

Inaccurate but damaging info

WE WOULD LIKE TO CORRECT THE INaccuracies that Victor Agustin presented in his Dec. 14 column. CODE-NGO has not given any farmers' organization P250,000 to fund an exposure trip to an organic farm in Hong Kong last May 2005; neither has it funded any of our trustee's exposure trip to Vietnam.

While we do not see anything intrinsically wrong with exposure trips, especially on something as important as organic farming, the simple fact is that we did not fund such trips.

We do not know who gave this false information to Agustin, and why the latter should so readily believe his source. We think, however, that it would have only been fair if Agustin had first validated his information with us and asked us for our side.

Also, while CODE-NGO is very concerned about the ill effects that unbridled agricultural trade liberalization will have on our small farmers and fishers, we have not provided funds for any Filipino activist now in Hong Kong for the WTO ministerial conference; and none of our trustees or staff were among those who went to Hong Kong.

We hope that Agustin would be more careful with his facts next time. We understand that the INQUIRER does not control the views of its columnists, but we also hope that it would exert more effort to ensure the factual accuracy of the columns that see print on its pages, particularly those that are potentially damaging to the reputation of persons and organizations.

—AURORA F. TOLENTINO,
chair,
Caucus of Development NGO Networks
(CODE-NGO),
2/F CCS Building,
Social Development Complex,
Loyola Heights, Quezon City

Prisoner of conscience

MYO MIN ZAW, ALIAS MOE HEM AUNG, 22, member of the All Burma (Myanmar) Federation of Student Unions, has been imprisoned since 1998. He was first condemned to 38 years in prison, and then to 52 years.

We are a group of teachers and students from Belgium, members of Amnesty International, which is opposed to all violations of human rights, regardless of the country where they are committed.

Myo Min Zaw is a prisoner of conscience, detained merely for having expressed his opinions. Aware of the power of the press, we request the Philippine government, through the Philippine media, to join the call for his immediate and unconditional release.

—MICHÈLE SINE
AND 4 OTHER SIGNATORIES,
Avenue Joseph Marvel,
40 5032 Corroy-Le-Chateau, Belgium

Impact of logging on forests, biodiversity

THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT to allow logging in Samar has been given commendable coverage in recent weeks by the INQUIRER. Some stories quoted findings from the Center for International Forestry Research and its partners that suggest logging and deforestation do not lead to large floods. Sadly, the San Jose Timber Corp. has used these findings in advertisements, published in other papers, to promote renewed logging in Samar.

We stand by the claim that logging is unlikely to cause large floods, but we also believe that industrial logging in Samar can cause small floods and biodiversity loss; it may also be economically unsustainable and fail to create local jobs.

Samar's forestry activities should focus on harvesting small volumes of timber and non-timber forest products. This is more likely to produce appropriate social, economic and environmental outcomes.

—GREG CLOUGH, Center for
International Forestry Research, Bogor,
Indonesia, g.clough@cgiar.org

MV Doña Paz

DEC. 20. IT HAS BEEN 18 YEARS SINCE MV Doña Paz collided with an oil tanker off Tablas Strait, Mindoro and sank. On this day, every year, families and friends commemorate the death anniversary of those who perished in that tragedy, the world's worst sea disaster of all time.

They say, time heals all wounds. But for me and my brothers and sisters, who lost our parents and a sister in that sea tragedy, it has been the thousand memories that they left behind and live in our hearts that soothe us. The memory of their love has become our shelter, giving us a peaceful feeling through difficult and pained times.

—MAITA ESPINA-ABUNALES,
12 Susana Ave.,
South Susana Homes,
Molino 2, Bacoor, Cavite

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'Inconsequential' section offers balance for a good day's start

I READ CHELO BANAL-FORMOSO'S piece titled "Beyond those 'F' words." (PDI, 12/04/05) She's absolutely right—my orientation is really political news coverage—I was a reporter covering the political beat for well over a decade with Business Day and its successor, BusinessWorld—but there's nothing like reading the Lifestyle section of the INQUIRER first thing in the morning to perk up my day before I go on to other things.

Even when I was a still covering the often rambunctious world of Philippine politics on a regular, daily basis, I always thought that the Lifestyle section—not only of the INQUIRER but also of the other dailies—offered a good balance to the more sordid realities we encounter in our daily grind.

I take my hat off to Formoso for her substantially overseeing what some perceive (and I staunchly disagree with the view) to be an "inconsequential" section of the Philippine Daily Inquirer.

—TEDDY MONTELIBANO,
uncommonjive@yahoo.com

Higher pay for examiners in licensure examinations

THIS CONCERNS THE LICENSURE Examination for Nurses conducted last Dec. 3 and 4 by the Professional Regulatory Commission (PRC).

There were at least 11,000 examinees who took the test and paid P900 each. There were 22 examinees assigned to each examination room. The instruction materials given to examiners and proctors were the same as that used during the last licensure examination.

In most testing centers located in public schools, many examination rooms were inadequately ventilated. The chairs used by the examinees were suited only for primary pupils and the examinees could hardly sit on them. Will our prospective registered nurses pass this licensure examination under these uncomfortable and inconvenient conditions? Remember, they will soon be our country's best dollar-earners.

And please increase the P300 daily honorarium of the examiners and proctors who are mostly public school teachers. Many of them reside far from the testing centers to which they are assigned.

—LUISITO S. SAN VALENTIN, ED.D.,
Department of Education,
Manila

INQBOX

What are your hopes and dreams for your family this Christmas season and beyond?

A bright future 4 my family esp.2 my 3 kids.
Life in dis country is so hard.. aggravated by bickering of politicians.
—jun sambalilo, 44, *proj4,qc*

A government with heart, soul and substance!
—Gil S. Santos, *Pasig City*

my hopes and dreams for family this Christmas are to have good health, to be strong in every problem that we encounter..
—Ayissa d.Laurilla, *21, iloilo city*

Let love and care be in our hearts in order 4 us 2 stay happy n contented wid our chosen careEr n life
—Rizalyn Muniz, 35, *Cavite*

To have good government, a leadership with honesty, integrity..
—george alaras, 31, *nasugbu batangas*

Inner peace and unending love for one another. Hope that we will stick together thru hardship and trials.
—Lovelyn Fortaliza, 32, *Cavite*

i hope dat our family wud stay happy & dat we wud be together always & forever
—Rowena Flor M.Aglubat, 25, *Gana,Caba,La Union*

i hope that my family will learn to dream big dreams for this nation by learning to appreciate the very thing things that make this nation great --the Filipino family.
—vanessa lacuesta, 27, *iloilo*

unity, love, prosperity & understanding.
—Lovelyn Fortaliza, 32, *Cavite*

long term good health & to be always together no matter what d odds
—Stephanie, 30, *qc*

i have surrendered 2 my Living God & His will be done in all my dreams & hopes 4 my 2 daughters & my whole family
—tricia pribhdas, 41, *qc*

that our families can be together forever. **—zenaida caguioa,** *urdaneta city*

To stay together forever despite of the struggles and problems in life
—Lovelyn Fortaliza, 32, *Cavite*

I hope for a progressive life next year & dreams for peace & unity to all.
—melissa fongwan, 35, *la trinidad,benguet*

"Ang may pagkain sa hapag kainan, 3 times a day"
—ian d. Fernandez, 26, *kidapawan city*

Happiness and Peace in dis season of Christmas
and to live a better life ahead.
—Gerald Relampagos, 30, *Davao City*

merry
Christmas!

TEAM Philippines: SEA Games champion!: Your message to our Filipino atheletes

Congrats 4 bringing glory 2 d country!
U are d superheroes of our nation!
—kateri corpus, 30, *urdaneta city*

You made us all proud 2 be Filipino!
—jeofrey abalos, 20, *pangasinan*

PINOY ATHLETES... ASTIG!!!
Congrats 4 a job well dOne!
—Jurjan, 18, *malaybalay*

at last! the Philippines found glory amidst d turmoil.
—kateri corpus, 30, *urdaneta city*

BE PROUD! AND DONT BE AFFECTED by CONTROVERSY!
—GAY TUPAS, 27, *digos city*

its further proof dat Pinoys are world class despite poor govt support.just imagine what dey can do if we have world class govt..
—armond ferriols, 40, *batangas cty*

ang buong sambayanan ay ipinagmamalaki ang mga athleta ng Pilipinas. Keep Up the Good work.!
zenaida caguioa, *urdaneta city*

Mabuhay ang atletang Pinoy! Kapos man sa budget pra sa training, magaling pa din!Ang sarap maging PINOY!
—mila cajote, 58, *cavite*

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Court upholds Palawan gas revenues

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—PALAWAN HAS A REAson to be merry this Christmas as it could become the richest province in the country.

The Palawan Regional Trial Court declared on Dec. 16 that the province is entitled to a 40-percent share from the profit in the $5-billion Camago-Malampaya Natural Gas-to-Power Project.

After two years and six months, the court finally ruled on the petition for declaratory relief filed by the provincial government against the national government, seeking to declare Malampaya as part of the territorial jurisdiction of Palawan.

The decision of RTC Branch 52 Judge Bienvenido Blancaflor said, "... the province of Palawan is entitled to 40 percent share of the national wealth pursuant to the provisions of Sec. 7, Article X of the 1987 Constitution and this right is in accord with the provisions of the Enabling Act, The Local Government Code of 1991."

Palawan's share, the decision added, should be computed based on revenue generated from the natural gas project since Oct. 16, 2001.

The project is expected to generate about $8.1 billion for the national government and $2.1 billion for the province of Palawan for the next 20 years or for the duration of the contract.

Since October 2001, Gov. Joel Reyes said, Palawan is supposed to get around a P3-billion share.

In favoring Palawan, the court cited the principles of local autonomy, devolution and decentralization as bases for its decision.

The national government contended that Palawan has no right over Malampaya because it is beyond the 15-kilometer municipal water but the court declared that even beyond the land mass and the 15 km, Palawan has every right to exercise government powers and functions because the Local Government Code and the Constitution warrant them.

"It would be unthinkable to limit the operation as well as the implementation of such law only to 'land mass' and the 15-km municipal waters of Palawan, or, to say that the legislators never intended to empower the province of Palawan to protect the environment, including the marine areas of the Camago-Malampaya natural gas project," the court said.

It also cited previous issuances, declarations of the agents of the government recognizing the right of Palawan over Malampaya.

One of these is Administrative Order 381 issued by then President Fidel Ramos on Feb. 17, 1998, which explicitly declared that the Camago-Malampaya reservoir is within offshore northwest Palawan and that Palawan is expected to receive about $2.1 billion from the total $8.1 billion government share.

On June 18, 2001, President Macapagal-Arroyo publicly declared that Palawan would be the richest province because of the share but her succeeding announcements on national radio and during the switching on of Tabangao, Batangas plant on Oct. 16, 2001, indicated that Palawan has no right to a share because Malampaya is offshore Palawan and is beyond the 15-km municipal waters.

"This is a wonderful Christmas gift to Palawan," Reyes said.

Ms Arroyo is expected to arrive in Palawan this week.

Sources from the provincial government said the President will inspect the extent of damage brought by typhoon Quedan and the continuous rains the past weeks. *Jofelle P. Tesorio, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

1,000 craftsmen take part in lantern fest

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—IN A religious art unseen anywhere in the world, more than 1,000 craftsmen with no formal training in lights and sounds engineering unveiled here at least 10 giant, glittering lanterns, their versions of the Star of Bethlehem that led the three Wise Men to the infant Jesus Christ 2,011 years ago.

The light that star illumined on Christendom's most holy night would be reenacted by 10 sets of 4,000 to 5,000 bulbs fitted in each of the 18.6-meter wide star-shaped metal frames, according to Roland Quiambao, one of the lanterns' designers.

Borne on trucks and arrayed at the SM City Pampanga's 3.3-hectare amphitheater here as early as Thursday night, all 10 lanterns are ready to outshine each other in the Ligligan Parul (Giant Lantern Festival).

Vying for the plum slot are craftsmen from the villages of Del Pilar, San Jose, San Nicolas, Santo Rosario, San Juan, Santo Niño, San Felipe, Santa Lucia, Dolores and San Pedro.

The images of these villages' patron saints, on fully-lighted biers and in full regalia, are expected to stand next to the lanterns during the competition that starts at 7 p.m.

"All the light and color designs are entirely new, not recycled," said architect Nestor Mangio, the chair of this year's festival.

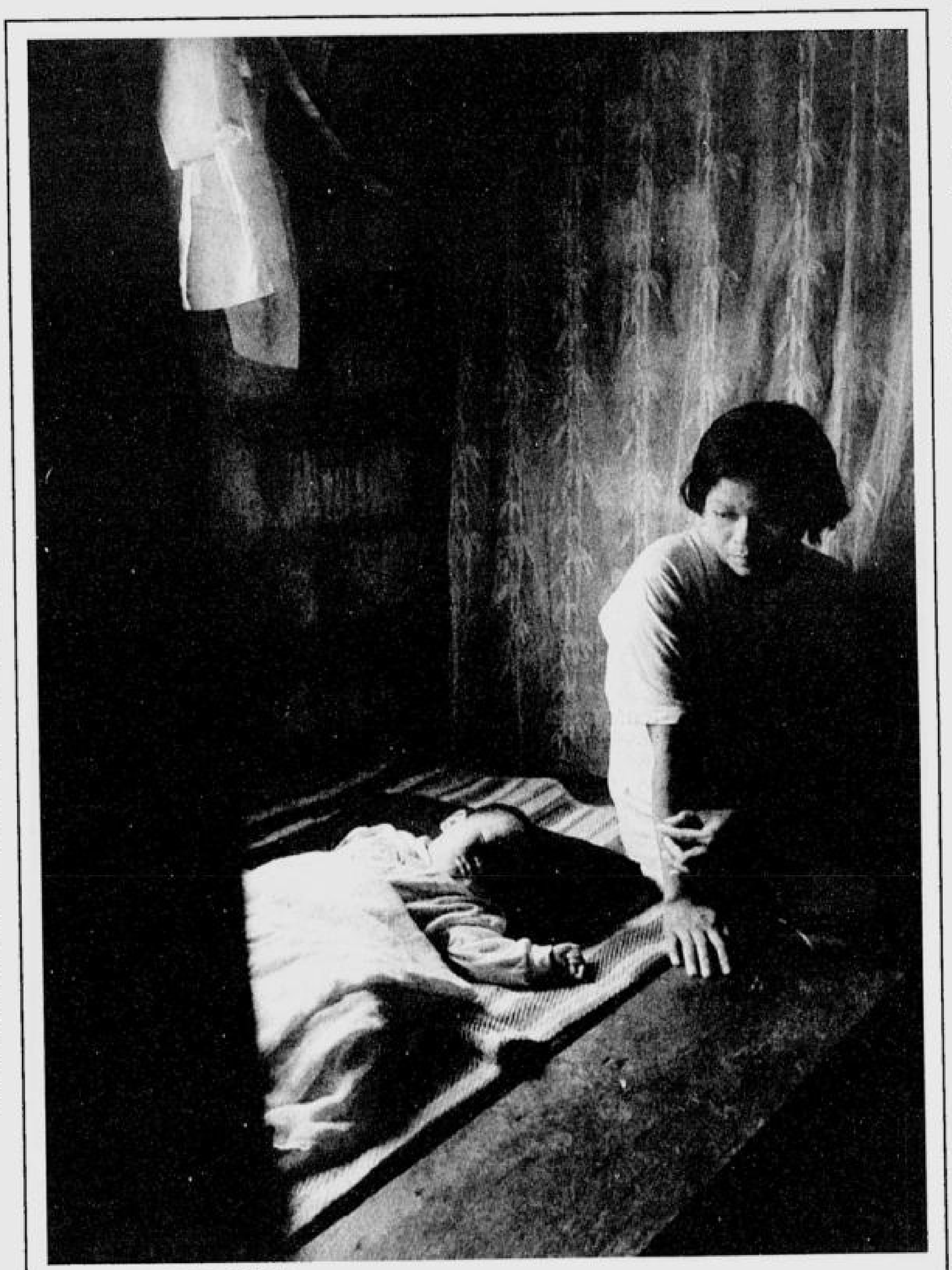
Individually and in batches, the lanterns are going to light up, give out out their rainbow colors in sync with three sets of music, making them give the illusion of dancing lights.

Mangio said at least 10 judges will choose the most beautiful piece on the basis of design, color combination and the interplay of lights and color with the music.

But the event, said Mayor Oscar Rodriguez, is not only awaited for its entertainment value. The venue could pack in as many as 30,000 spectators.

"More than anything else, this is a religious and cultural tradition of the Kapampangan where Christ, our light, is at the center. We don't ever want to lose His sacred message of peace and justice," Rodriguez said.

Sustaining the tradition that dates back to the Spanish colonial years, the city government has subsidized the lantern-making by giving P105,000 to each of the villages. The festival committee gave P5,000 each. The rest of the costs was shouldered by residents in *bayanihan* spirit, as it was in the olden days.



MOTHER AND CHILD
Jovelyn Dato, 29, watches over her 10-month old child John Samuel inside her mother's home in a housing project built for victims of typhoons in Real, Quezon. At least 30 families were given new houses in the project.
LYN RILLON

Exclusive resort bars tax assessors of town

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—Palawan Vice Gov. David Ponce de Leon has scored the Amanpulo Resort in Cuyo town for refusing to allow the staff of the Provincial Assessor's Office to inspect its property for purposes of real property taxation.

Amanpulo Resort is famous for its exclusivity and high-end services and caters to the rich and famous.

Singer Mariah Carey was among its guests when the famous diva had a concert in Manila.

"Its refusal is very glaring," Ponce de Leon said. "It seems that Amanpulo Resort wants to create its own republic."

He made the remarks in an interview after the provincial council's budget deliberation on Dec. 13.

The INQUIRER called the Makati office of Amanpulo and the staff member who received the call referred the matter to sales executive Rio Bongco, who was not available.

Several calls and e-mail requests for reactions made by the INQUIRER got no answer from the office.

Ponce de Leon further disclosed that Amanpulo has a sour relationship with the host municipality Cuyo because the resort, he claimed, "has not been doing its corporate social responsibility."

The island municipality can be reached in 12 hours through a small voyage vessel or by an hour's plane ride.

For the first time, Ponce de Leon said, Amanpulo officers went to the governor's office two weeks ago. *Jofelle P. Tesorio, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Head of tricycle drivers' group killed

PAGADIAN CITY—AN UNIDENTIfied man shot and killed a leader of a tricycle drivers' group here early yesterday.

Chief Insp. Robert Bahian, city police chief, said two gunmen riding in a motorcycle shot Antonio "Boy" Ang, 57, president of the Pagadian Integrated Tricycle Drivers and Operators Confederation (Pitdocon), the largest group of tricycle drivers in the city.

Ang's group was instrumental in the increase in tricycle fare which took effect early this month. It was his organization's fare matrix formula that the city government adopted when it approved the increase.

Ang was the organization's president in the past seven years.

Emily, Ang's wife, said her husband had an argument with a bakery worker in the neighborhood at around 6 a.m.

"After the argument he went inside the house and made coffee. He later decided to buy bread. Later, I heard gunfire and I saw a man wearing a green polo shirt running and carrying a gun toward the highway," Emily said.

Police said Ang was shot in front of the bakery.

Police earlier identified the gunman as bakery worker Robert Campion, 21, with whom Ang had an argument earlier.

But witnesses said there were other suspects.

Bakery owner Lilian Yangao said a man wearing a green polo shirt shot Ang in the back of the head, then fled toward the highway where another man was waiting.

But Campion, who was wearing a white T-shirt, is still considered a suspect and is now in police custody, Bahian said.

"It was a well-planned shooting. They used a getaway motorcycle which did not have a plate number," Bahian said. *Michael Sarcauga, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Bishop says GMA backing Church on birth control

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—President Macapagal-Arroyo has assured that her administration would promote only natural family planning methods as legislators set debates on a population management bill, the chair of the Catholic Church's commission on family life said on Sunday.

San Fernando Archbishop Paciano Aniceto said the President gave the assurance over breakfast that they shared after she attended the 4 a.m. Mass at the Metropolitan Cathedral here on Sunday. Ms Arroyo arrived here unaccompanied by any member of the First Family.

"[Ms Arroyo] said she would follow the Church's stand," Aniceto told the INQUIRER shortly after the President left for Manila.

'Cafeteria method'

In their conversation, he said Ms Arroyo objected to the "cafeteria method" wherein family planning choices are varied and readily available.

"She's a devout Catholic and she said she would abide with the doctrine of the Church," Aniceto said.

He said the Church rejects the use of artificial contraceptives and other methods that promote abortion and promiscuity.

"I hope she would mobilize the agencies in government for prolife measures," he said

On Dec. 12, the House of Representatives approved for plenary debates House Bill 3773 (Responsible Parenthood and Population Management Act of 2005).

Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman, principal author of HB 3773, said the bill seeks to provide the public "free and full access to adequate and relevant information on reproductive health and a full range of family methods and devices."

Objectives

He said the bill is not proabortion but aims to prevent abortion by "reducing the incidence of unplanned, mistimed and unwanted pregnancies."

Reproductive health activists, however, said Ms Arroyo and the Catholic Church should wake up to the "population and reproductive health nightmare" that the country is in now. The Reproductive Health Action Network, an umbrella group of nongovernment and people's organizations fighting for the passage of HB 3773, said the bill was the only way for a comprehensive national population management and responsible parenthood program.

"The Church and [Ms Arroyo] should wake up to the fact that the health and population situation needs to be addressed now with the health sector already in crisis," said Eden Divinagracia, executive director of the Philippine NGO Council for Population, Health and Welfare.

"Professional groups, including health workers and entrepreneurs, are pushing this bill..." Divinagracia said. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk, and Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Ecija gov says militants' actions prove links with NPA

PALAYAN CITY—NUEVA ECIJA Gov. Tomas Joson III said the action of some militant organizations would prove that they have links with the New People's Army.

Joson, in a press conference aired by radio station dwNE on Friday, warned these groups, particularly the party-list groups Bayan Muna and Anakpawis, that he would not allow them to influence the province's villages.

"I am telling you, it's improbable for them to say they don't have connections with the NPA. They are the ones who first send their men in the barangays to conduct propaganda [against the government] and sow intrigues before the NPA comes in," Joson said.

He accused these groups of deepening land disputes by providing support for one of the parties in the conflicts. This intervention, he said, sometimes results in violence.

An example of this support, he said, is the encampment of members of militant organizations on land that is the subject of a dispute.

Joson said he would not allow the militants and the NPA rebels to turn residents into unbelievers of the government.

"I am telling you, stop your recruitment and terror activities in the barangays, and the government will stop running after you," he said.

Joson, also chair of the regional peace and order council (RPOC) in Central Luzon, vowed to help pursue the resolution of the killings and abductions of leaders of militant organizations in the region.

In his recent dialogue with leaders of militant organizations, Joson said he urged them to share information and evidence that would lead to the resolution of these cases.

He said many barangay officials and residents have been asking him to send additional soldiers in their areas because of the supposed harassment from rebels.

Joson said he has to speak against the NPA and its supporters even as the threat against his life continues. He said his name was included in the NPA's "hit list."

"You must also speak against them. If all our barangays will be under their influence, we will suffer. But I tell you, it is better to live in an environment run by the duly constituted government," he said. *Anselmo Roque, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Joker says Meralco more believable than Napocor

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Abigail L. Ho

THE LOPEZ-CONTROLLED Manila Electric Co. has found an ally in maverick administration Sen. Joker Arroyo in its dispute with the state-owned National Power Corp. (Napocor) over an alleged unpaid debt of P42 billion.

Napocor is proposing a government takeover of Meralco by converting the debt into shares.

Arroyo, chair of the Senate blue ribbon committee, said the issue of whether Meralco really owed the government P42 billion was beside the point. "It's a question of honesty, who is more believable."

"Quite frankly, between Meralco and Napocor, I will believe Meralco. Napocor is the most dishonest company in the whole Philippines. How can you believe a company which has caused us P600 billion in debts?" the senator said.

"That's why I keep on badgering Napocor. The whole country is weighed down by Napocor," he said, noting how he had been questioning Napocor's debts since 1995 when he was still in Congress.

Asked if he would not even recommend a study of the government claim, Arroyo said: "The study I would like undertaken is how Napocor incurred a P600-billion debt and why the government keeps on covering it up.'"

Meralco is contesting the claim that it owes Napocor P42 billion. Elpi Cuna, a Meralco vice president, said "Meralco has not recognized any liability arising from the 10-year contract [with Napocor] for the sale of electricity."

Napocor and Meralco entered into a 10-year contract for the supply of electricity in 1994, which stated that the Lopez-led firm should draw 60,092 gigawatt-hours of electricity from Napocor, with a minimum 3,600 megawatts starting in 2001.

However, since power demand as forecast by Meralco did not fully materialize, its use of power from the state firm fell below the required amount under the contract.

Mediation

The two entities went into a third-party mediation in early 2003 when their discussions on the validity of the supply contract bogged down. The contract lapsed at the end of 2004.

As a result, the two parties were able to file a joint settlement agreement, which said that Meralco should pay Napocor around P28 billion (at P1.51 per kWh), minus adjustments, for undrawn electricity under the 10-year power supply contract.

But out of the P28 billion, Meralco will pay only P20 billion over a five-year period as the P8 billion falls under some of the adjustments that Napocor will have to pay. These adjustments include provisions for transmission delays and P8 billion for "delays in turnover of directly connected consumers."

Also, under the agreement, Napocor assured Meralco of a "timely dispatch" of the power distributor's independent power producers (IPPs) at mutually agreed levels in 2002-04. Appropriate adjustments would then be made for any delays.

The financial benefits that Meralco would reap if its IPPs ran at minimum energy quantities (MEQ) would then be passed on to consumers. Savings to be generated from this was pegged at around 25 centavos per kWh.

Part of the savings, around 12 centavos, will then be passed on to Meralco consumers in the form of lower rates.

ERC review

The Energy Regulatory Commission is reviewing the merits of the settlement agreement to determine how the deal will affect consumers.

"Hearings are still ongoing. We're waiting for all evidence to come in and for one more witness to be presented. As soon as this is done, that's the time we'll decide," ERC chair Rodolfo Albano Jr. said at a briefing yesterday.

He noted that the settlement agreement, to the tune of P14 billion, was being opposed by 21 individuals and groups, making it difficult for the ERC to come out with a decision right away.

In September, however, Albano said Meralco submitted evidence that it should pay Napocor only P14 billion.

"But this was opposed again (by one of those against the agreement) because, according to him, Meralco and Napocor had already submitted their evidence and closed their case," Albano said.

"There's a legal question here since they've already finished submitting their evidence. (The opponent) says the ERC should junk this P14-billion figure as this isn't part of the original case," the ERC chair said.

Rate reduction

Taking this new amount into consideration, he said the effect on consumers—a possible rate reduction of 12 centavos per kWh—might not be the same as what Meralco had said.

Albano said the ERC would only be able to determine the impact of the settlement agreement on consumers once it finished the hearings and presentations of evidence.

If the ERC does not approve Napocor and Meralco's joint settlement agreement, the two parties will resort to arbitration.

But pending approval of the settlement agreement by the ERC, Napocor continued to bill Meralco for the difference between its actual and contracted usage.

Meralco, however, is no longer recognizing these charges as part of its liabilities to Napocor.

"Napocor's claims can no longer grow," Jesus Francisco, Meralco president and chief operating officer, said in an earlier interview.

"In the event the ERC disapproves the settlement agreement, both parties shall revert to their respective positions before the mediation. If this happens, the remedy available to both parties, pursuant to the 10-year contract, is arbitration," Meralco had earlier said.

Meralco A, other stocks decline

From page A1

Lopez company which has interests in infrastructure development, power generation and distribution—dropped a peso or 2.1 percent to P46.50.

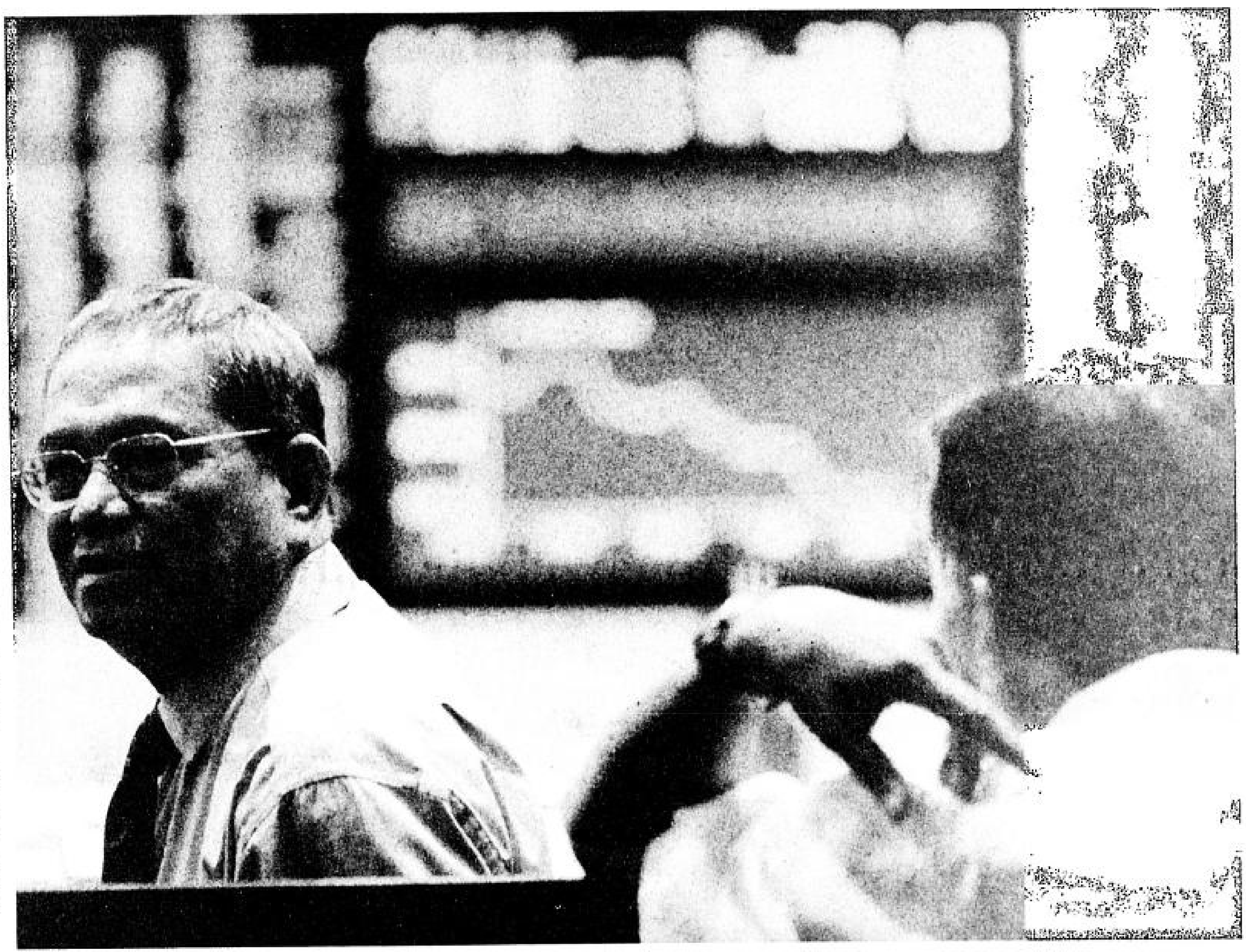
Meralco B shares, available to Filipino and foreign investors alike, slipped 5.5 percent to P21.50. Meralco A shares, limited to Filipino investors, also sank 5 percent to P14.25.

Shares of Meralco, First Holdings and Benpres accounted for 11.5 percent of total market turnover yesterday.

Market analysts and fund managers said investors took yesterday as an opportunity to sell after the INQUIRER reported that the government was planning to convert into equity in Meralco the P42 billion it allegedly owed state-owned National Power Corp.

The liability allegedly represented the amount of power Meralco had committed to buy from Napocor since 2001 under the terms of a supply contract signed in November 1994. But Meralco said it was not recognizing any liability arising from the supply contract.

A takeover of Meralco as the government's leverage to cut electricity rates was one of the options proposed by a Malacañang official in a memorandum to President Macapagal-Arroyo in July to settle the dispute between Meralco and Napocor.



TRADERS chat as the stocks index electronic board shows a downtrend at the Philippine Stock Exchange in Makati City. AFP

Knee-jerk reaction

"There was some knee-jerk reaction on the issue. For investors, they feel it's prudent to see what will happen on the horizon. Others took it as an excuse to take profit," said Jonathan Ravelas of Banco de Oro Universal Bank.

Dealers said market investors were also in a holiday mood, opting for cash rather than more stocks ahead of the long Christmas break.

"They are capitalizing on their gains from last month's run-up ahead of the holidays," Ravelas said.

Political concerns following persistent rumors of a plot to overthrow the government and debates on amending the Constitution have also prompted investors to "stay square," he said.

But reports about the dispute between Meralco and Napocor did not catch investors flat-footed, said Jojo Gonzales, president at brokerage firm Philippine Equity Partners Inc.

Not new

"This particular dispute between Napocor and Meralco is not new. Napocor and Meralco have blamed each other for violating terms and conditions of the power supply agreement. For Meralco and its shareholders, it is another thing to worry about, on top of ongoing concerns like securing a distribution rate hike, reducing systems losses and funding refunds," Gonzales said.

"We expect Meralco and Napocor to go through protracted litigation and/or arbitration before this dispute is settled," he said.

Paul Joseph Garcia, chief investment officer at fund manager ING Investment Management Philippines, said he expected Lopez stocks to remain volatile due to the ongoing negative sentiment. But investors are also seeing this as a chance to pick up bargains, he said.

"I guess it was already priced in. It (negative headline on Meralco) was sort of an excuse for some investors to sell in the market. All Lopez stocks were affected," Garcia said.

Opportunity to buy

The bleeding may be stemmed in the next few days if prices continue to go down and are cheap enough to lure bargain-hunters, he said.

"A lot see it as an opportunity to buy. On a medium to long-term view, we still see earnings to be resilient," Garcia added.

Aside from Lopez stocks, companies that led the market's fall yesterday included Ayala Corp., Globe Telecom Inc., Bank of the Philippine Islands, Ayala Land Inc. and San Miguel Corp.

Ayala Corp. fell P7.50 to P300, while Globe Telecom retreated P20 to P700.

Bank of the Philippine Islands eased 50 centavos to P53.50, while Ayala Land was down 10 centavos at P9.50.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. ended unchanged at P1,745, erasing earlier weakness.

A shares of San Miguel Corp. ended steady at P64.50, while San Miguel B shares fell P1.50 to P82.50. *With a report from AFP*

Firms go after Meralco

From page A1

debt-conversion option.

Asked to comment on FPI's demand, a Meralco spokesperson said it would give its side today.

FPI's members are among the biggest manufacturing companies in the country and have one of the biggest collectibles from Meralco.

A takeover of Meralco was one of the options proposed by a Malacañang official in a memorandum to Ms Arroyo in July to settle the dispute between Meralco and Napocor.

But Meralco does not recognize that it owes Napocor P42 billion. The liability allegedly represented the amount of power Meralco had committed to buy from Napocor since 2001 under a 10-year supply contract.

The contract was signed in 1994 at the peak of the energy crisis that gripped the country and prompted the government to sign deals with independent power producers.

Supreme Court ruling

In 2003, the Supreme Court ruled that Meralco overcharged its consumers by 16.7 centavos per kilowatt hour since 1994 and ordered the largest power utility to reimburse clients whose excess payments had reached more than P29 billion.

Meralco said that as of December last year, it had completed the processing of refunds for 5.1 million "active and terminated residential and general service customers."

The company said it refunded to these customers a total of P11.6 billion, or 38 percent of the refundable amount.

Industries, which account for only 23 percent of Meralco's client base, are demanding P18 billion from Meralco, which has not indicated when and how it would meet its obligations.

Sergio Ortiz-Luis, president of the Philippine Exporters Confederation Inc., said the conversion of debt into equity was one of the options considered by business groups in 2003 in collecting on Meralco's unpaid refund.

Ortiz-Luis said some members preferred getting their rebates in cash rather than shares of Meralco, which was why the conversion of debt into equity was not pursued.

But with the government suddenly raising the possibility of taking over Meralco with a debt conversion, Ortiz-Luis expected members to seriously consider this mode anew, especially with Meralco's foot-dragging in reimbursing the manufacturing companies.

Business groups have already asked Ms Arroyo to press Meralco to meet its obligations because the extra cash from the reimbursements could give industries much needed relief from higher power and fuel costs (arising from higher crude oil prices and the expansion of the value-added tax).

At a recent meeting, Meralco promised to reimburse its industrial clients but business groups wanted more than promises and demanded that Meralco put a timetable on the reimbursement schedule.

Pope says true gift of Christmas is joy

From page A1

commercial "pollution" was ruining the spirit of Christmas.

In his sermon, the Pope also told the faithful to remember that God was the "only insurance" to help people deal with sickness, loneliness and death. "Only one insurance protects us. Only the Lord, and he tells us not to be afraid," he said.

He told the congregation, which spilled into a small square outside on a cold Rome morning, that his visit was "a return home" because he had been assigned the parish as his titular church when he was first made a cardinal in 1977.

All cardinals around the world are assigned a titular church in Rome as a symbol of their unity with the Pope. The former Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was based in Munich at the time.

Benedict was also keeping up a tradition cherished by his predecessor John Paul II, who devoted many Sunday mornings to visiting Rome's parishes from the affluent historic center of the city to lower-class neighborhoods on the outskirts.

Before heading back to the Vatican in an open-top car, the Pope put on a long white coat to guard against the chill and stood on the steps of the church, where he wished several thousand people outside "many, many wishes for a Christmas and a happy New Year."

The atmosphere was warm as Benedict shook the hands of many of the parishioners, but less informal than John Paul's visits to churches in line with the Pontiff's role as Bishop of Rome.

John Paul, who died in April, made it to 301 out of Rome's 334 parishes, often lingering to banter with children. When his health deteriorated toward the end of his papacy and the Sunday morning outings became too strenuous for him, John Paul started greeting parish groups at the Vatican.

On Saturday, the Pope will lead the world's 1.1 billion Roman Catholics into Christmas with a Christmas Eve Mass in St. Peter's Basilica.

On Christmas Day, he will deliver his first "Urbi et Orbi" (To the City and the World) Christmas message and blessing from the same central balcony of St. Peter's where he first appeared to the world as Pope minutes after his election in April. *Reports from AP and Reuters*

UN, Church join hands in anti-AIDS drive

From page A1

Only around 2,300 cases have been recorded by the Department of Health as of this year. But officials peg the actual number at around 10,000, considering that two to three cases might have been missed for every documented case.

For this endeavor, Borromeo said the UNAIDS and the Church, represented by Caritas Manila, had set aside their conflict over the use of condoms and other forms of contraception to control a runaway population growth rate in the Philippines.

In their initial meetings, both parties agreed to focus on abstinence and loyalty to a single partner—the centerpiece of the Church population control program—as still the best ways to prevent the spread of AIDS.

Borromeo said project proponents were still in the "confidence-building" stage and were hoping to make significant strides soon.

"We're looking at ways on how we can benefit from one another to address the problem with AIDS," she said.

The Church was tapped precisely to encourage persons living with AIDS and HIV to come out in the open, she said.

Focus on care, support

"We need to address the issues of stigma and discrimination," she said. "We also need to provide care and support to those already infected."

The Church's role was particularly important for children described as "infected and affected" by the presence of the virus in the family, she said.

Officials and advocacy groups are still finding ways to determine how many children are actually carrying the virus that had been passed on to them by an infected parent.

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Death for 7 in trader's abduction

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THEY RECEIVED THE BLEAK NEWS LESS than a week before Christmas.

The Antipolo City Regional Trial Court yesterday sentenced seven men to death for kidnapping a Chinese-Filipino businessman in Makati City more than five years ago.

Those sentenced to die by lethal injection were Raul Merjudio, Rolly Hutalla, Jessie Costales, Ezer Lavilla, Renato Salatan, Ciriaco Hutalla Jr. and Joseph Castillo.

Castillo earlier testified against his co-accused, but his request to turn state witness was denied.

At large

Another accused, alleged mastermind John Kenneth Coyukiat Ongpac, remains at large.

Court records said armed men on board a white Nissan Safari forcibly took the victim at about 6 p.m. on Feb. 1, 2000.

The kidnappers asked for P50 million as ransom.

The victim was brought to a safehouse in Antipolo City but Police Anti-Organized Crime Task Force operatives managed to rescue him the following night.

Police also arrested five of the eight suspects during the rescue operation.

Operatives later raided another safehouse at the JC Manufacturing Compound in Cavite.

Two of the remaining suspects were arrested there, except for Ongpac who owned the factory.

The victim positively identified the seven arrested men as among those who took him.

Castillo also corroborated the victim's testimony, saying all of his co-accused were present during a meeting on "the second week of January" in Cavite, where they planned the kidnapping.

Denial

But the six accused all denied involvement in the kidnapping during the trial, saying they were just hired by Ongpac as caretakers, drivers and mechanics.

The court, however, gave more credence to the victim's testimony.

"Their bare denials prove futile and implausible in the face of positive identification by the (victim)," RTC Branch 74 Judge Francisco Querubin said in his 12-page decision.

"This direct evidence is further buttressed in all its confirmatory force by the confession of (Castillo)," he added.

Live 'urbane' life in Metro–BF

By Tarra V. Quismundo

AVOID SPITTING ON THE SIDEWALK. PICK up the trash you see on the road. And please wear something decent.

These are just a few of the 17 things urban dwellers should know, according to Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Chair Bayani Fernando.

Intent on spreading the good word about responsible urban living, the MMDA will begin distributing posters next year on the 17 "tenets" of urbanity.

"This is meant to help city dwellers (by informing them about) the proper way of living in an urban setup, especially in crowded, poorer barangay and communities," said Corazon Gonzales, MMDA Public Affairs Service (PAS) director.

The project is the brainchild of Fernando who wants to promote a responsible and proactive urban lifestyle among Metro residents. It is in line with his continuing "*urbanidad*" or urbanity program aimed at persuading Metro Manilans to get rid of irritating habits like littering, going out in public without a shirt, or spitting. The posters, of course, would carry the signature pink color identified with Fernando's projects in the Metro.

REM ZAMORA

MERRY AND BRIGHT?
A child walks past a drummer boy statue associated with a joyful Christmas in front of a Manila police station.

Victims of alleged swindler assured of legal assistance

ILOCOS SUR GOV. LUIS "CHAVIT" Singson pledged yesterday to help provide legal assistance to those who filed a case against a suspected big-time swindler who allegedly used his name to defraud them of substantial cash and jewelry.

In a statement sent to the INQUIRER, Singson also commended "for a job well done" members of the Manila Police District (MPD) who nabbed the suspect, identified by the arresting officers as Dolores Encabo Barrion, alias Cynthia Gabio, of Cubao, Quezon City.

"I am willing to help in any way I can in the prosecution of this alleged swindler. If she is found guilty, she should be put away so she won't be able to victimize people again," Singson said in his statement.

He urged the people to report to him or to his office anyone who uses his name for whatever purpose.

"I have not authorized anyone to use my name for any purpose. Those who need my help can get in touch with me personally or through my staff at the Governor's Office in Vigan, Ilocos Sur," Singson said.

At least 100 people who claimed to have been victimized by Barrion had come forward to file a complaint against her, according to Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong, MPD director.

The 37-year-old suspect, police said, convinced her victims to invest in her business ventures by dropping the names of well-known politicians, including Singson.

Other warrants

Barrion has standing warrants of arrest from the courts in Quezon City and Marikina City, Metro Manila; San Mateo and Montalban in Rizal, and in Batangas, the police said.

The suspect had reportedly duped her victims of more than P5 million in cash and jewelry, according to police authorities.

Barangay chair stabbed dead in Makati City

By Tarra V. Quismundo

A BARANGAY CHAIR IN MANILA WAS killed by two robbers at dawn yesterday even as his wife begged them to spare his life.

The victim was identified as Antonieto Chit, 48, the chair of Barangay 283, Zone 26, in Binondo. He was killed, however, inside his house on Constancia Street in Barangay Olympia, Makati.

"We are now establishing robbery as the main motive, because the family said the robbers took some of their belongings," said Senior Insp. Gary Reyes, chief of the Makati Police Department's Homicide unit.

"But we are also considering that the robbery may be a diversion for something else. Maybe something personal or political was also involved," he added.

Case investigator PO2 Nilo Sadsad said in his initial report that two men, wearing hats and jackets, entered the victim's house at around 3 a.m. yesterday. After turning off the main power switch, the suspects went to the master's bedroom where the victim and his wife were sleeping.

"They seemed to know the layout of the house really well," Reyes told the INQUIRER. "They hid their faces and wore gloves to avoid leaving their fingerprints behind."

The suspects woke up Chit and demanded that he open the vault inside the bedroom. Chit, however, refused and grappled with the suspects.

The victim was stabbed 13 times even as his wife repeatedly begged the suspects to stop.

Reyes said the men took an undetermined amount of jewelry and cash before they fled the scene of the crime.

METROBRIEFS

Stricter law on billboards

PARA WALANG DISTRACTION!

HUGE billboards dotting the skyline may no longer be a common sight in Quezon City should a measure seeking to regulate their display is approved. In hopes of ridding the urban landscape of eyesores as well as reducing traffic accidents, Councilor Edcel Lagman Jr. has filed a proposed ordinance regulating the display of billboards and other signs in the city. Under the measure, billboards shall not be allowed within 25 feet of any road or street in the city. They will also be banned within 1,000 feet of any historic site, school, church, hospital, cemetery, park, and other areas, where they will "block scenic views." The ordinance also covers the contents of billboards by forbidding "lewd, obscene, vulgar and offensive" visual or verbal messages. Violators shall be fined not more than P5,000, or imprisoned for not more than six months, or both, depending on the discretion of the court. ***DJ Yap***

Cops play Santa

MEMBERS of the Northern Police District played Santa yesterday, distributing gifts to over 100 people, including children who live near the police headquarters. "The gift giving is part of our community service in bringing the policemen closer to the people," said Chief Insp. Virginia Tejuco of the NPD Police Community Relations office. Yesterday's affair, spearheaded by NPD director Chief Supt. Raul Gonzales, was only the first in a series of activities being planned by the NPD to bring the police closer to the people, she added. "We are hopeful, that little by little, the community would realize that policemen are always on their side," she added. ***Nancy C. Carvajal***

Fake NGO in Caloocan

MGA LOKONG 'YON!
P800

BEWARE of men posing as members of the Caloocan City Health Office. Mayor Enrico Echiverri issued the warning yesterday after several businessmen complained that members of a nongovernment organization, the Confederation of Youth Organization, have been going around, asking them for money. "They pretended to be members of City Hall's 'Operation Basurahan' project," he said. The mayor added that he has not authorized any group to collect money from establishments this holiday season. Based on reports sent to Echiverri's office, members of the group approached businessmen and claimed they had been authorized by City Hall to sell a garbage can and several trash bags for P800. ***Nancy C. Carvajal***

Shocked by CA verdict on Webb

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

I WAS SHOCKED AT THE DECISION OF THE Court of Appeals upholding the guilty verdict on Hubert Webb et al. by the Parañaque Regional Trial Court on the Vizconde massacre.

How could the justices of the appellate court back an irrational decision made by Judge Amelita Tolentino on Jan. 7, 2000?

Well, I think I know the answer: Tolentino has joined their ranks: she's already a Court of Appeals justice.

If I were made of lesser stuff, I would no longer be writing this. I would have stopped after Webb and company were convicted.

I've been maligned and crucified because of my stand that Hubert Webb and his co-accused in the case are innocent.

My No. 1 critic is my sister, Wanda Teo, who lives in Davao City.

She told me she was hurt by all the insults and insinuations of having been bribed by the Webbs for my stand.

I haven't changed my stand after all these years. I never will.

Why? Because I made an investigation into Hubert's allegation that he was in the United States when the Vizconde women and girl—Jennifer,7; Carmela, 18; and Estrellita, the mother—were murdered by people who broke into the home on June 30, 1991.

Carmelita was gang-raped before she was killed.

I went to California and found out that Hubert Webb was in the US as he claimed.

One of the pieces of evidence I gathered was a receipt for a bicycle that Hubert bought at a shop in Orange County, a few miles from Los Angeles.

The receipt was in the name of Hubert Webb and the date it was issued was June 30, 1991!

There is a one-day difference between the dates in California and Manila. We're a day advanced over California. For example, now it's Dec. 20 in Manila, and Dec. 19 in California.

Okay, you'll argue, after taking part in murdering the Vizcondes on June 30, 1991, Hubert flew to the US and arrived there on June 29, 1991. He then bought a bicycle; hence, the receipt.

But why would Hubert buy a bicycle after landing in the US? His mind would have been preoccupied with other things.

Other pieces of evidence I gathered were the entries in the logbook of a pest control company in Orange County where Hubert worked.

The entries said he worked there in April and May 1991. The entries were the basis for Hubert's daily wage.

It was highly unlikely for Hubert to have thought of coming back to Manila since he was busy at the pest control company.

I also interviewed young people in the neighborhood where Hubert stayed with his aunt who is married to a Caucasian American.

This was in 1995, but they still remembered Hubert because even for his comparatively short height he dunked a ball with ease in the basket during basketball games.

At the time I was conducting my own investigation in California (note: the National Bureau of Investigation never did send an agent to the US to check Hubert's alibi), an agent from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was conducting a parallel probe.

I forgot the agent's name now but I was able to talk to him and compared notes with him.

The FBI's findings most probably were among the bases for the US State Department's testimony in favor of Hubert Webb.

Judge Tolentino ignored the evidence and the US State Department testimony.

There were insinuations that then Sen. Freddie Webb paid me off to defend his son's innocence.

Susmaryosep! Napakabarat ni Freddie Webb. He's such a tightwad the GROs who were his partners at the karaoke joints where we used to sing complained he gave them only P20 each time.

The minimum tip was P500 for each girl. *Ako na ang nagpupuno sa tip sa GRO ni Freddie.* (Hehehe! Sorry about that, Freddie).

Freddie and I became close friends after he sought my help in swearing to his son's innocence.

I thought the Court of Appeals would right the wrong decision of Judge Tolentino.

I was wrong.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, December 20, 2005
4th Week of Advent

1st Reading: Is 7:10-14
Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth. He was sent to a young virgin who was betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the family of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

The angel came to her and said, "Rejoice full of grace, the Lord is with you." Mary was troubled at these words, wondering what this greeting could mean.

But the angel said, "Do not fear, Mary, for God has looked kindly on you. You shall conceive and bear a son and you shall call him Jesus. He will be great and shall rightly be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the kingdom of David, his ancestor; he will rule over the people of Jacob forever and his reign shall have no end.

Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be if I am a virgin?" And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the holy child to be born shall be called Son of God. Even your relative Elizabeth is expecting a son in her old age, although she was unable to have a child, and she is now in her sixth month. With God nothing is impossible."

Then Mary said, "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me as you have said." And the angel left her.

Commentary

And again we hear again the story of Jesus' conception and the angel sent to Nazareth to Mary, betrothed to Joseph of the house of David. This child's promise is unbelievable: he will be great, named Jesus (savior) and called Son of the Most High. God will give him the kingdom of David, and he will rule Jacob and the people forever! This is the stuff promises are made of! Mary is troubled at the words of greeting and wonders over their meaning. And with days before the birth of our God, the Word made of our flesh do the words of grace trouble us too? She says yes to God's hope for humanity. Will we say yes and let God use our flesh for the truth to be told in our bodies and lives?

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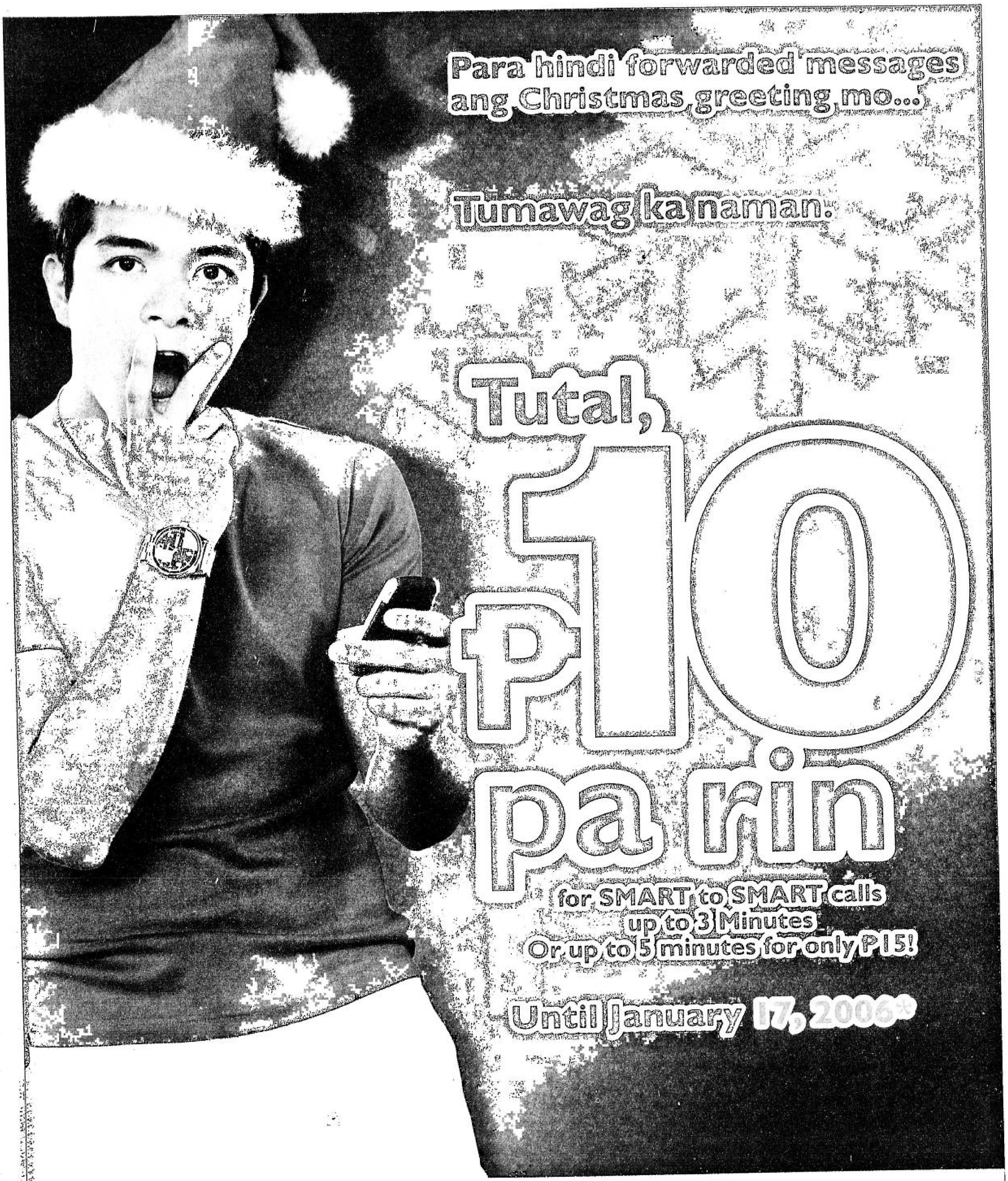
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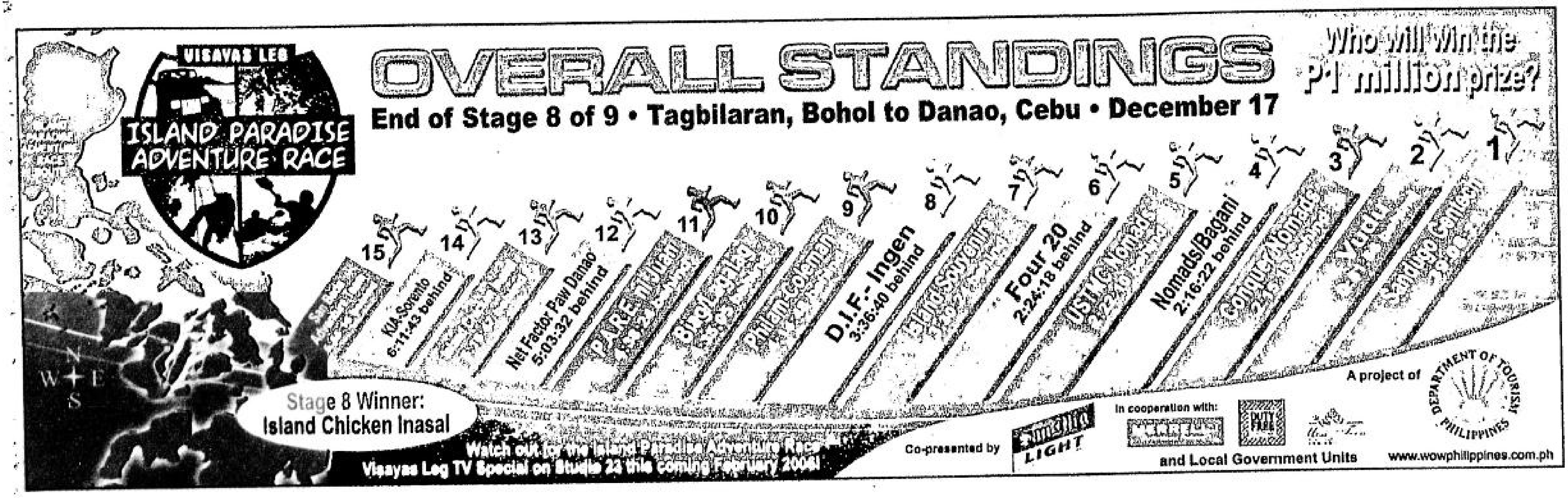
VISAYAS LEG
ISLAND PARADISE ADVENTURE RACE
OVERALL STANDINGS
End of Stage 8 of 9 • Tagbilaran, Bohol to Danao, Cebu • December 17
Who will win the ₱1 million prize?
15
14
KIA-Sorento 6:11:43 behind
13
Net Factor Paw Danao 5:03:32 behind
12
11
10
9
D.I.F.- Ingen 3:36:40 behind
8
7
Four 20 2:24:18 behind
6
5
Nomads/Bagani 2:16:22 behind
4
3
2
1
N W E S
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SPORTS TV

Compiled by L. Manguiat

AMERICAN FOOTBALL:
NFL—Packers vs Ravens; 10 a.m. (r-midnight); ESPN.

BASKETBALL:
NBA—Warriors vs Celtics; 8:30 a.m. (r-9 p.m.); Solar Sports

Ex-Auburn star may suit up for Ginebra

By June Navarro

PORTER

HIS FACE WAS ONCE ON THE COVER OF Sports Illustrated, a testament to how good Chris Porter was in college while playing for Auburn University in the US NCAA.

Struggling Barangay Ginebra is trying out Porter for Sean Lampley's spot as the Kings try to arrest a three-game losing slide and gain automatic semifinal seeding in the San Mig Coffee-PBA Fiesta Conference.

The 27-year-old shooting guard is expected to easily make the 6-foot-6 height restriction for imports and will get his PBA baptism of fire in a crucial game for the Kings tomorrow if he impresses Ginebra coaching staff enough.

Listed as 6-foot-7, Porter arrived over the weekend and has been going through a series of workouts to determine his readiness to replace Lampley.

Porter's entry could bring a lot of promise to the defending champion Gin Kings' campaign after Ginebra had lost three straight and dropped to 7-7 with two games left in the classification round.

After appearing on the November 1999 cover of Sports Illustrated, Porter was selected 55th overall by the Golden State Warriors in the 2000 NBA Draft.

He went on to average 8.6 points per game and 3.7 rebounds an outing with the Warriors the entire 2000-2001 NBA season before being traded to Charlotte the following year.

The former Auburn U star was soon waived by the Hornets and continued his career in Europe where he saw action for Italian and Portuguese ball clubs in the Euroleague.

Scouting reports said that the member of the collegiate All-American second team in 1998-1999 is a super leaper and has excellent body control for his 218-pound frame.

But according to the NBA Draft profile, Porter is torn between being a shooting guard and a small forward. He's also not big enough to work the post although the shaded area is where Porter thrives, the profile added.

The Gin Kings must defeat the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals tomorrow and the Alaska Aces to keep them in the running for the last available automatic semis seat. Purefoods Chunkee had clinched the first.

Meanwhile, Ranidel De Ocampo was named San Mig Coffee-PBA Press Corps Player of the Week after leading the Air21 Express to a pair of critical victories over the Gin Kings and the Red Bull Barako.

Nat'l archers shatter five bow marks

FILIPINO ARCHERS SHATTERED FIVE men's bow records in the recent Southeast Asian Games.

Four of the marks were established in the compound bow division, which made its debut in the SEAG, while the other was set in recurve.

Earl Benjamin Yap led the locals' record-breaking spree in compound, shooting 355 points in the 30-meter distance to wipe out the 352 mark of Raul Arambulo.

Yap then combined with Gil Gabriel and Adam Jimenez III to post 3962 in the Fita round and surpass the 3900 standard set by Arambulo, Carlos Carag and Clint Sayo in July 2003 in New York.

Yap, Carag, Gabriel and Jimenez also fired 245 in 3X9 team match and 486 in 2x27 final total to erase the old records of 240 set by Arambulo, Jimenez, Rizal Ledesma and Christian Obmerga and 454 held by Manuel Martinez, Arambulo and Yap himself, respectively.

SEAG men's team gold medalists Marvin Cordero, Mark Javier and Florante Matan produced the recurve mark by scoring 476 points in the 2x27 finals. The old record of 473 was set by Oscar Briones, Clint Sayo and Michael Facundo.

Caddies Open program set

WITH THE FIRST YEAR OF THE NATIONAL Caddies' Open program turning out to be a huge success, a second staging of the one-of-a-kind, life-changing tournament will be held in February next year with a little revision.

From an age limit of 35, next year's playing of the 72-hole event will be limited to those who are 25 years old and below with the winners going home with basically the same shot at better lives.

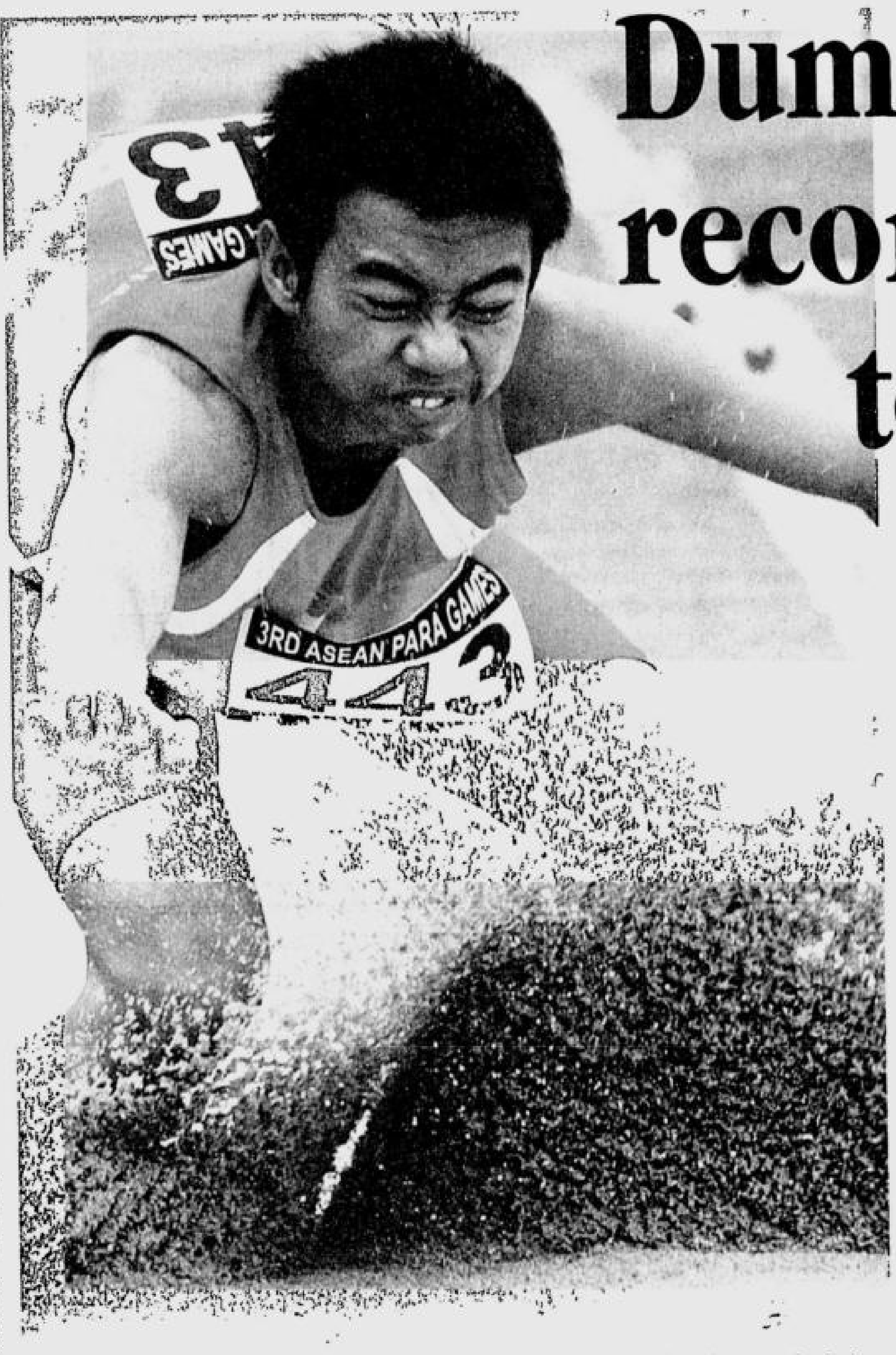
The first beneficiaries of the long-term NCO program gained results that were above expectations. Mario Labajo, third placer in the first staging, made it as far as the semifinals of the RP Amateurs in Bacolod.

First NCO champ Jonel Ababa and runner-up Joseph Labajo also made it to the match play stages after besting RP pool members, and were vital cogs in Nike's sweep of the recent 56th Fil-Am Invitational in Baguio.

The next tournament will seed the top three finishers into the program, which will house, feed and fund them for at least the end of next year while they develop their games. Calatagan Golf Club in Batangas will again be the site of the first 36 holes before play shifts to the Canlubang layout in Laguna. The final round will be played at Wack Wack.

The Philippine Amateur Golf Development Foundation (PAGDF) ran the first tournament, which had as backers the FG Sports Foundation, Pagcor, San Miguel Corp. and the Philippine Sports Commission.

Dumapong rips record; RP falls to 6th place



INDONESIA'S Setiyo Budi Hartanto competes in the men's class F46 long jump at the 3rd Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) Para Games. Hartanto won. REUTERS

By Jasmine W. Payo

WORLD GAMES MEDALIST ADELINE DUMAPONG SHATTERED HER personal record en route to a golden finish in powerlifting even as athletics accounted for four more Philippine golds in the 3rd Asean Para Games yesterday at the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex.

The five golden performances, unfortunately, weren't enough as the Philippines slipped from fifth to sixth place on Day 5 with an 18-32-25 gold-silver-bronze tally.

The Philippines failed to match the gold-medal surge of Indonesia, which posted key wins in athletics and swimming to jump from sixth to fourth place with a 25-16-15 haul.

Unrivaled in almost every sport, Thailand is assured of the overall title with a 103-55-23 record. Still 40 golds behind was Vietnam with a 63-28-18 tally, while Malaysia took the third spot at 61-29-15.

Wheelchair-bound Dumapong captured her second straight Para Games gold medal after lifting 117.5 kilograms, breaking the 107.5 kg record she set in the 2003 Hanoi Para Games.

The 32-year-old Ifugao native was also a bronze medalist in the 2000 World Para Games in Sydney, Australia.

Cheryl Canta, Ma. Afrecita Salazar, Michael Mora and Maritess Burce starred in the Philippines' four-gold romp in athletics.

Burce also set a new Games' record in discus throw at 7.28 meters on Sunday night to clinch the gold medal in the physically handicapped event.

Canta copped the gold in the javelin for double-leg amputees with a heave of 16.95 meters, a far cry from the 14.42-meter mark set by silver medalist Tin Tin Khaing of Myanmar.

Salazar topped the 800m in the paraplegic event after clocking three minutes and 1.05 seconds. She edged teammate Odessa Buenflor, who timed in at 3:01.59

Mora threw 9.59 meters to rule the shot put event for the intellectually challenged.

In wheelchair basketball, the Philippines settled for a silver after bowing to Thailand, 59-55, at the Emilio Aguinaldo College Gym.

The Philippines is still seven golds behind fourth-placer Indonesia (25-16-15) and fifth-ranked Myanmar (25-11-3).

Ramos, Unson lead Young Guns

TOP SEEDS ALLENBY JIRO RAMOS and Andie Unson surged ahead in their respective divisions even as Linnel de Villa fired an ace to highlight first action yesterday in the Young Guns 2005 Golf Invitational tournament at the Tagaytay Midlands course.

Unson, a reigning division titleholder in the US Kids World Championship, scored an 85 under windy conditions for a nine-shot advantage over Si Eu Ahn in the girls' 10 years division with Mara Monsalve in third spot at 98.

Ramos, himself a former winner at the US Kids, banged in three birdies in the back nine en route to a 73 that gave him a six-stroke lead in the boys' 9 years category. Fidel Concepcion was far behind at 82 while Mark Anthony Arevalo had an 84.

De Villa stole the show by acing the 120-yard, hole No. 3 with a Callaway Hawk Eye 5-iron. Her Titleist ProV1X ball landed about three inches past the flag then spun back into the hole.

Linnel finished with an 89 and fell seven shots off younger sister Debbie in their duel for the 15-17 years crown.

The third of the De Villa siblings in the field, Angelika assembled an 82 to post a one shot lead over Christina Potenciano in the 11 years category.

Multititled Miguel Tabuena inched ahead by two strokes over Remo Fuego in the boys' 11 years with Bino dela Paz within striking distance after an 82.

The other leaders were Danica Uy and Dana Guerrero (9 years), Stephanie Olea (12 years) and Young Kyung Woo (13-14). Si Woo Kim (77) was one up on former world jungolf titlist JR Gonzales in boys' 10 years play.

Uy and Guerrero were tied for the lead after similar 114s. Olea moved up by five over Katya dela Cruz following an 88 and Woo, scoring a 75, was four up on local bets Cyna Rodriguez and Crystal Superal.

Crystal trophies are at stake for the division winners of the tourney. All entries will also get the chance to win exciting raffle prizes, among them a round-trip ticket for two to Hong Kong courtesy of PAL, 10 iPod Shuffles and two iPod Nanos during the awarding ceremony on Dec. 19.

INQBOX Question of the Week

What are your hopes and dreams for your family this Christmas season and beyond?

Win this *Inquirer shirt

Senders of d best 20 texts as publishd in Tuesday's INQBOX wiL each receiv an *Inquirer Shirt!Ü

Key in inquirer box name/age/city/message. Text your answers to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart) (Maximum of 160 characters)

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Mamiit, rowers join major PSA awardees

SEVEN MORE ATHLETES WHO DID WELL in the 23rd Southeast Asian Games made it to the elite roster of major awardees to be feted by the PSA (Philippine Sportswriters Association) during its Annual Awards Night on Jan. 14 at the Manila Pavilion.

Rowers Suhod Hakim, Ruperto Sabijon, Manuel Maya, Junray Dayumad and Ricky Sardena, netter Cecil Mamiit and wushu artist Rene Catalan were named recipients of major awards for helping Team Philippines capture the overall title in the SEA Games.

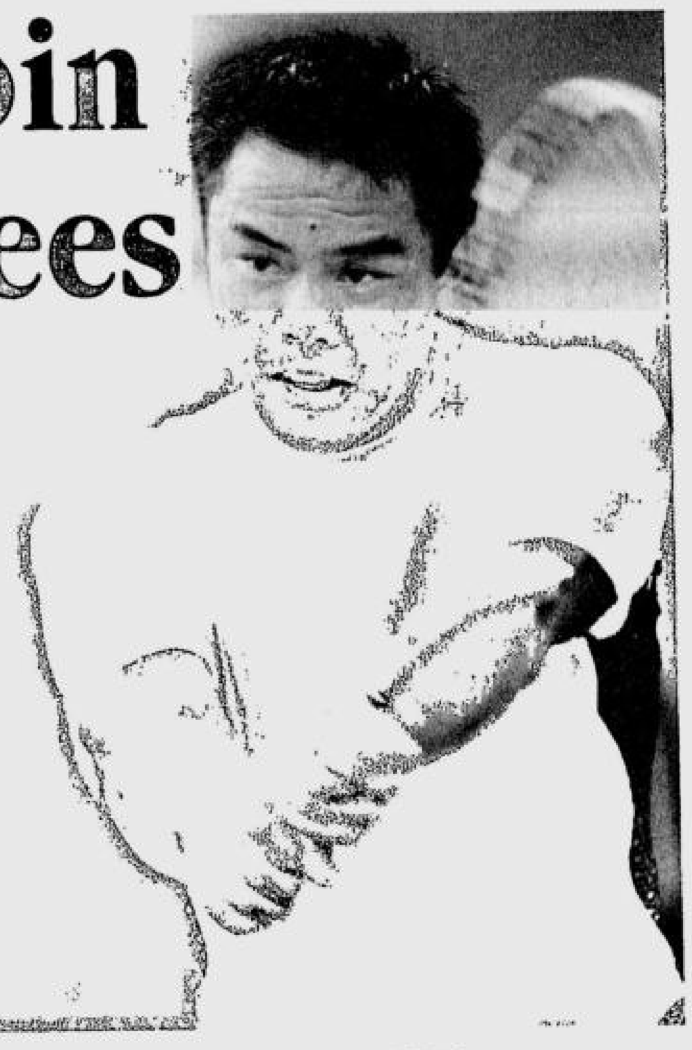
Earlier, the association named Team Philippines as its Athlete of the Year for winning its first-ever overall championship in the biennial, 11-nation meet.

Hakim, Sabijon, Maya, Dayumad and Sardena were members of the team that swept the four gold medals staked in the men's division of traditional boat racing while Mamiit struck in the singles and men's team competitions in tennis.

Catalan won the gold in men's sanshou (48 kg) in wushu before topping the event in the eighth world championship recently. The PSA Board earlier named 14 athletes led by diver Shiela Mae Perez and Alex Pagulayan of billiards as major awardees.

Tagaytay chess team prevails

TEAM TAGAYTAY DOWNED DE LA SALLE UNIVERSITY-Taft, 2.5-0.5, in the seventh and final round to capture the title, via tie-break, of the just concluded Mendoza-Arzaga Law Firm Chess Team Championship held over the weekend at the 4F of J&F Divino Bldg. in Quezon City. Led by veteran campaigner Edmundo Gatus and teammates Truman Hernaez, Jeffrey Areque and Ricardo Briones, Team Tagaytay collected a total of 5.5 points with five wins, one draw and one loss, same tally posted by Phil. Navy powered by NM Nicodemus Alisangco, after seven-rounds of play in this two day affair organized by Metropolitan Chess Club. However, Team Tagaytay of Mayor Bambol Tolentino emerged champion due to higher tie break points. The Phil. Navy team of Capt. Larry Batalla took the runner-up honor in the event that lured 20 teams.



MAMIIT: Good for two golds in the recent SEA Games. AP

SPORTSWATCH

Camus tops Miata Cup

THE 5TH YOKOHAMA MIATA CUP ENDED AT THE Subic International Raceway recently with reigning champion Bubi Camus of Camus Engineering taking the overall honors. Joselu Romero-Salas/BOSCH-Las Palmas Team came in second and RG David/ BOSCH-Las Palmas Team third. Round 9 began with John Camus, older brother of Bubi, in first place, followed by Romero-Salas in second and Lito Ignacio finishing third. Bubi Camus clinched first, Romero-Salas was second and David, third in round 10 which saw Ignacio and David figure in a collision on the second to the last lap. Visit www.miataclub.ph for details.

Ho grabs 18-under title

OSHUA TAN HO BEAT MARK BALCE, 6-0, 6-3, LAST Sunday to win the boys' 18-under title in the 2005 Philippine Columbian Association (PCA) Open Juniors Tennis Championships in Paco, Manila. In the boys' 16-under division, Olongapo City-based Leyan Moncera scored a 3-6, 6-2, 6-1 victory over Russell Arcilla Jr. to capture his third title this year. Jose Lorenzo Ferrer pocketed the 14-under title over Jose Manuel Narvaez, 6-3, 4-6, 7-5, and annexed the 12-under title following a 6-0, 6-0 win over Tim Polero.

Las Piñas 3-cocker starts

FAST-PACED FIGHTS RESUME TODAY VIA ANOTHER 3-cock derby that will pit participants from Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Muntinlupa, Parañaque, Pasay and Las Piñas at the Las Piñas Coliseum. Action starts at 7 p.m. Today's host is Benjie Castañares and LPC Bet Takers. Also scheduled are three more 3-cock derbies: Dec. 22 (Rudy Sayaman), Dec. 27 (Baldo Perez and Julius Canumay) and Dec. 29 (Eddie Alejandro). Call 873-1040, 874-3910 and 0926-7450375 (Julius).

Applauding the deserving

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

ALMOST FORGOTTEN WERE THE VARious men and women, entities and corporations, who made our victory possible in the recent 23rd SEA Games.

Globe handed down P100 million and it deserves standing ovation.

Philippine Airlines shelled out P50 million—and more. That, too, merits our applause.

There were individuals, too, like Hermie Esguerra, Ricky K. Razon and Smart's Manny V. Pangilinan, among others, who went out of their way to help finance our athletes. They need to be applauded, too.

Always, as I was saying, athletes alone couldn't do it. They need others, like you and me, but more importantly, the government and the moneyed people in our midst.

You and I—meaning chiefly the occupants of the stands—can only do so much in helping our athletes win the gold.

It is mainly in our egging them on to victory till the last strand of our vocal chords has turned mute that we can show and lend our support to them.

More crucial than anything, however, in fuelling our athletes' drive for excellence is the government and individuals/entities wealthy enough to spare something for our achievers.

Support begins with the training and ends with the last whistle blown in the battlefield.

But in the end, it's the athlete that will decide his fate.

You and I, government and private sector, we are like the school. Bottom line is the student.

You can put your child to the supposed best school in the land but that is no guarantee your child will come out a winner, a financial success, a hero to society.

The school is but one percent to me, the student 99 percent.

It's the same with athletes. You give them virtually all they want but that is no assurance they'll end up winners.

Still, rare are the ones who can sacrifice so much just to win that single piece of metal in the Games, whether it's the SEA, Asian or Olympic.

The gold medal isn't really gold but, hey, look at the way the athlete trains to win it. He'll sacrifice his social life, leave the boys in the mall, skip a trip to the beach.

Writer Hemingway asked, "What price valor?"

Nothing really if we talk in terms of the color of money.

Hemingway, a decorated war hero, tried pawning his medal of valor and he was disappointed to discover it had practically no value at all.

When he felt he couldn't write novels anymore, he blew his brains off with a shotgun on the porch of his house, while his wife lay asleep upstairs.

There are many ways to endear one's self to the world. One is by helping others achieve their dreams. If you have helped one, you have already contributed to the well-being of the universe.

Hemingway had done a lot to better the world he lived in: Writing great books.

I cite now the example of San Miguel Corp., which bankrolled 13 of the 41 disciplines in the recent SEA Games—the most by any corporation in the land. These are boxing, wushu, karate, wrestling, traditional boat racing, athletics, muay, dance sport, lawn bowls/petanque, baseball, archery and judo.

Just imagine the millions spent by San Miguel in the recent SEA Games. Could be mind-boggling, you know.

But did we ever hear San Miguel breast-beat, even if the 13 disciplines it had supported captured almost half of the country's total gold medal harvest of 113?

No, not at all, even if it could be safely said that San Miguel now owns most of the bragging rights in the aftermath of RP's overpowering victory.

For, the truth is San Miguel's 13 disciplines produced 56 gold medals, 32 silver and 39 bronze medals.

If that is not worthy enough of our adulation, then we need not applaud The Beatles for their contribution to world music, which was so stupendous by any yardstick of excellence. Just recently, The Beatles were chosen the "best singing group of all time."

San Miguel deserves a year-end citation from my peers during the PSA Awards Night?

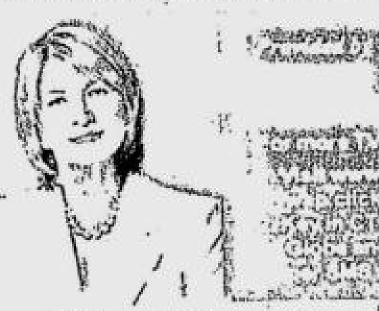
I say what The Beatles say, "Yeah, yeah, yeah!"

* * *

Send comments to menju@pldtdsl.net

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TV GUIDE
Tuesday, December 20, 2005

ALL NEW SEASON
THE APPRENTICE
MONDAY 10PM
SEE IT FIRST ON
ABC
ALL NEW SERIES
APPRENTICE
Martha Stewart
TUESDAY 11PM



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Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5			Winner TV Shopping		World Pool Masters				Sentro	Mumbai Thrillers	Ikaw Lang				Big News	The Apprentice		ALI	
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Little Amy	Mr. Bean	Naruto	Amazing Twins	Meteor Garden Season 2	TV Patrol World	Mga Anghel Na Walang Langit	Kampanerang Kuba	Only You	Vietnam Rose	Pinoy Big Brother	Bora			Insider
AXN		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Season 4)		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Season 4)		The 4400		Amazon		24		The Amazing Race Family Edition				House		Las Vegas	
Cartoon Network	Johnny Bravo	Dexter's Laboratory	Powerpuff Girls	Tom & Jerry Show	Baby Looney Tunes	Codename: Kids Next Door		The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy		Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers	Battle B-Daman	Machine Robo-Rescue	X-Men Evolution	Samurai Jack	Justice League	Static Shock	Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers
Cinema One		Burgis				Mano Po				Sigaw				Captain Barbell				Hostage	
Cinemax	Money Talks			The Naked Jungle			Father's Day (5:45 PM)				Mistral (7:25 PM)			Hard To Kill			A Slight Case Of Murder		
CNN				Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International		World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
Discovery Channel		The History Of Singapore		The Mistresses		Austin Stevens		Walking With Prehistoric Beasts		Rides		Human Discovery		Wild Discovery		Deadliest Catch		Mostly True Stories	
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean: The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/Untalkative Bunny	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Lilo & Stitch	Sabrina, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney			Suite Life Of Zack And Cody	Phil Of The Future	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Chip N Dale's Rescue Ranger	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN			In The Driver's Seat	Atlantic Coast Conf. Basketball: Princeton vs W Forest				Boxing Series Friday Night Fights				Sportscenter Asia	Pro Billiards '05 Women's Trick Shot Magic Billiards		Rewind: Premier Snooker League '05				Sportscenter Asia
ETC		Good Morning Miami	Knock First	1 Hr. Edited Version Of Today Show		Elimidate	Change of Heart	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	JKX	Simple Life	One Tree Hill		For Love Or Money		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
EWTN	Catholic Social Teaching	Angelus (3:15 PM)	ABCatholic	Angel Force	Angels Of God	Rosary With Mother Angelica	The Gospel Of John	EWTN Gallery	Lord, Have Mercy	The Journey Home Encore		Council Of Faith	Good Or Evil-Who Decides?	Daily Masa (SAP) Live		Angelus (10:15PM)	Rome Reports	Web Of Faith	
Fox News		Hannity & Colmes		On The Record With Greta Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor		Your World With Neil Cavuto		Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Kung Mamahalin Mo Lang Ako	Now and Forever	Date With Tiffany		Dragonball Z	Slam Dunk	Frog Prince	24 Oras		Extra Challenge	Sugo	Encantadia	Starstruck 3	Jewel In The Palace		Bahay Mo Ba 'To?			Saksi
Hallmark Channel	Bewitched IV	Mcleod's Daughters IV		HCA: The Fairytaler	Sesame Street		Who's The Boss	Bewitched IV	The Nanny III	Family Law II		Mcleod's Daughters IV		Silent Night			Five Days To Midnight		Family Law II (11:25PM)
HBO				Finding John Christmas (4:10 PM)			The Last Ride (5:45 PM)			Escape From L.A. (7:15 PM)				Rome Ep 05: The Ram Has Touched The Wall		Rome Ep 06: Egeria		S.W.A.T	
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Pangarap Kong Jackpot		Home Shopping Network		ME TV					IBC News Tonite	Home Shopping Network	
JackTV	Family Guy	Just For Laughs (Gags)	Beat The Geeks	WWE Bottomline		WWE Afterburn		X-Play	Banzai	Mad TV		Trigger Happy TV	Primetime Glick	South Park	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	Ren & Stimpy Adult Party Cartoon	Family Guy	Wwe Heat	
Lifestyle Network	Secret Gardens	The Fixt	Mission Organization	Carol Duvall	Molto Mario	Hot Off The Grill	Good Eats	Extreme Cuisine	Unwrapped	Passion For Dessert	Second Look		Look For Less	Life & Style		Who's Wedding Is It Anyway?		Road & Track	Back To Basics
MTV Philippines	MTV Screen	Spring Break	Dyes		Punk'D	Pop Inc		MTV Hits				MTV Hits	Get Spotted	TRL		Advance Warning	Pimp My Ride	MTV Hits	VH1 Video Collections
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYX Versions	MYX Firsts	Star MYX	MYXILOG	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Top Of The Pops	Radio MYX	MYX News	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX
National Geographic		Seconds From Disaster		Inside 911		Is It Real?		Top 5		Wow!		About Asia		Nat'l Geographic Specials		Seconds From Disaster		Is It Real?	
NBN				New Life TV Shopping		Teledyaryo	Diyos Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Siya?	Sea Games				Teledyaryo				Pilipinas Ngayon Na!		Bantay OCW With Susan K	
Nickelodeon	Blue's Clues/ What Planet Are You From	Rugrats	Hey Arnold!	My Life As A Teenage Robot/ Right On Top	The Adventures Of Jimmy Neutron				Naturally Sadie	Romeo	Drake & Josh	The Fairly Odd Parents	All Grown Up	As Told By Ginger	Rocket Power	Chalkzone	The Wild Thornberrys	The Angry Beavers	The Brothers Garcia
PBO			Pinoy Idols								Pangako Ng Kahapon				TGIS The Movie				Pre Hang-gang Sa Huli
Qtv		Endless Christmas (Navidad Sin Fin)	Mariana (Sin Pasado Conocido)	Cabocla	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Golden Bowl	Star	Laugh To Laugh: Ang Kulit	My Guardian Baby		All In	News On Q	Sana'y Muling Makapiling		Groupee TV	
RPN 9	TV Shopping		Defenders Of The Earth	Hey Arnold!	Wild Thornberrys	Sponge Bob	As Told By Ginger	Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Real Gilligan's Island		The Cut		Paradise Hotel		Newswatch Now	Tuesday Night Thrill		
SBN 21				New Life TV Shopping				Winner TV Shopping				Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		Sony Bmg Video			
Solar Sports		WTA '05 Advanta Philadelphia Finals				Denmark Open Mixed Doubles Finals		Denmark Open Men's Singles Finals		Denmark Open Women's Singles Finals		Sportsdesk		NBA Game Warriors @ Celtics					NBA Inside Stuff
Sports Plus		ACC Men's Basketball TBD				NFL 2005 Cincinnati @ Detroit						Ultimate Fighting Championship				Party Poker.com World Open 2005			
Star Movies	Reality Check			Body Count			A Very Cool Christmas			Bruce Almighty (7:15 PM)		Me, Myself and Irene				Nature Unleashed: Volcano			
Star World	Becker	The Bold & The Beautiful		Hollywood Squares	Whose Line Is It Anyway?	Angel		The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Friends	American Idol Special		Desperate Housewives		Tru Calling		Friends	American Idol Special
Studio 23		Astroboy						Get Backers	Pinoy Big Brother	Wazzup Wazzup	Andromeda		Smallville (8:20 PM)	Point Pleasant (9:10 PM)		News Central	Oprah		Just Shoot Me

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

Ang inyong tagapaghatid ng ulat-pangmulat
alas-10 ng gabi na! Tuwing Huwebes
Ating kabalitaan
Cheri Mercado
Dito lang sa ABC
INQ TV

Athletes with disabilities need permanent support

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

I FIND IT IRONIC THAT WHILE NORMAL AND able-bodied Filipino athletes are rewarded for winning medals in the Olympics, Asian Games and the just-ended 23rd SEAG, there is no law that will similarly reward the champions of the Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Para Games for persons with disabilities (PWDs).

"We do not ask for special treatment, only for equality," said multititled powerlifter Adeline Duma-pong in a recent interview with the PDI's Luige A. del Puerto. "Society treats us as headaches, which shouldn't be the case. Given the chance, PWDs could contribute to nation-building," added Dumapong, who took up computer education at St. Paul's College in Quezon City and subsequently worked as a telemarketer.

The country's most outstanding athlete for the differently-abled, Dumapong won a bronze medal at the 2000 Paralympic Games in Sydney and a gold at the 2003 Para Games in Vietnam. But despite her winning feats, Dumapong did not receive the usual honor and accolade befitting an Olympic and SEA Games medal winner. The Philippine Sports Commission do give incentives to the winners of the Para Games (and other achievers in non-Olympic sports), but this gesture is not enough. Methinks the cash rewards and lifetime benefits for these gritty athletes with disabilities, including medal winners of non-Olympic sports like billiards, bowling, golf and chess, should be permanent like what is provided for in Republic Act 9064, also known as the "Sports Benefits and Incentives Act," which was signed into law by President Macapagal-Arroyo in 2001.

At the risk of being repetitive, I am appealing again to the members of Congress, particularly Bacolod Rep. Monico Puentevella, a former PSC commissioner; and former Manila Mayor Mel Lopez, to consider filing a bill for athletes with disabilities just like RA 9064.

Over the years, I have written about the plight of these athletes with disabilities for the sake of equity and fairness. They deserve a better treatment from all sectors, including the government, which had poured a lot of money into the 23rd SEA Games.

"But look at us," said a broken-hearted Dumapong, "we even had to beg for our uniforms." A wheelchair-user from Ifugao, the 32-year-old Dumapong was stricken by polio at the age of 3. She grew up at Bahay Mapagmahal, an institution at the Philippine Orthopedic Center for disabled children run by nuns. In her 10-year stay at the center under very strict and tough conditions, Dumapong learned the good values of discipline and determination to achieve excellence not only in sports but also in life.

Standing only 4-foot-10, she launched her sporting career as a swimmer, but gave it up, saying *"hindi ako matutong huminga."* Dumapong later took up wheelchair racing, then moved on to compete in the shot put, discus and javelin throw competitions. Francis Silva, a wheelchair-bound painter, encouraged her to try powerlifting while Ramon Debuque, the national champion for powerlifting among regular athletes, polished her skills. Dumapong trained for the Sydney Olympics under coach Nestor Patoja.

Hornets repulse Spurs; Hawks up

ATLANTA'S Josh Smith (5) picks up teammate Tyronn Lue as Joe Johnson (2) looks on as they celebrate the Hawks' 110-107 win over Denver. AP

NEW YORK—DAVID WEST SCORED 19 points and rookie Chris Paul flirted with his first career triple-double with 17 points, 12 rebounds and nine assists as the New Orleans Hornets stunned the San Antonio Spurs, 89-76, on Sunday in Oklahoma City.

Desmond Mason contributed 15 points to the New Orleans cause and Rasual Butler added 13 to help the Hornets collect their third win in four games.

Tony Parker and Michael Finley each had 17 for the NBA champion Spurs while Tim Duncan had a rare off night hitting for just 11 points on 4-of-12 shooting to equal his season low.

No other Spurs player managed to hit double figures as San Antonio (19-5) fell for just the fifth time this season.

Tied 69-69 with just under nine minutes to play, the Hornets put the game away with a 10-0 run.

In Los Angeles, Tracy McGrady scored on a driving layup as time ran out to lift the Houston Rockets to a 76-74 triumph over the Lakers.

McGrady's winner was part of a 20-point night.

Reuters

Complete results

Philadelphia 107, Toronto 80; Atlanta 110, Denver 107 (OT); New Jersey 118, Golden State 90; N. O./ Oklahoma City 89, San Antonio 76

SOLAR Sports will beam the Golden State-Boston game live from TD Banknorth Garden starting 8:30 a.m.

Sore toe sidelines Yao

LOS ANGELES—CHINESE ALL-STAR center Yao Ming of the Houston Rockets missed his first game of the season and the third of his NBA career Sunday night because of a sore right big toe that will sideline him indefinitely.

"It's not a one-game thing," coach Jeff Van Gundy said before the Rockets met the Los Angeles Lakers in the finale of a six-game road trip. "It will probably be a multiple-game thing, whatever that is. We'll know more after he sees the doctor.

Yao returned home before Sunday night's game. He has had a problem with his right big toe for some time, missing two preseason games because it was bothering him.

The 25-year-old center has played in 266 regular-season games since joining the Rockets in 2002. Houston returns to action Wednesday night at home against Toronto.

Van Gundy said Dikembe Mutombo would start in Yao's spot. Mutombo was averaging 10.9 minutes, 1.7 points and 3.3 rebounds in 20 games. *AP*

Toyota Vios for an ace in Jungolf bash

A TOYOTA VIOS WILL BE UP FOR grabs as a hole-in-one prize in the 30th anniversary tournament of the Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines on Thursday at the Riviera Golf and Country Club Couples in Silang, Cavite.

Put up by Toyota Balintawak's Cosco Oben, who is himself a former world jungolf champion, the Vios will be given to the first player who scores an ace on a designated hole.

Other prizes are set to be given away in the event which has Samsung Electronics Phils., Nike through its local distributor Pacsports Phils., Philippine Airlines, Unilever, SportsPlus and Riviera Golf & Country Club as major backers.

Nike will be providing trophies and prizes for the top finishers in each of the 14 divisions and team and individual winners.

SportsPlus has agreed to air a two-hour special on the event being held to commemorate Jungolf's three decades of bringing pride and glory to the country in various international competitions.

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Winston Seasons Greetings!
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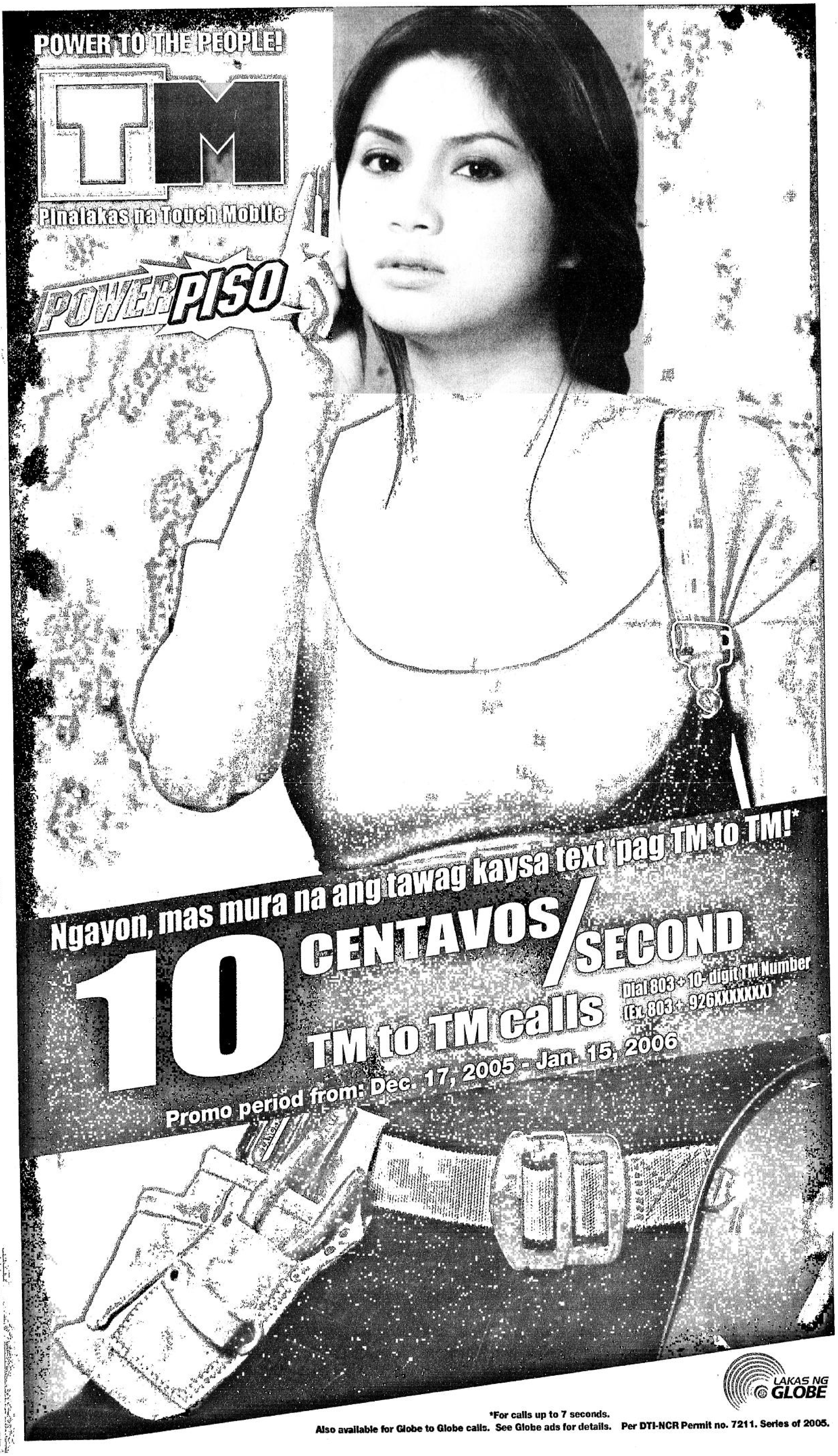
Cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health.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10 CENTAVOS/SECOND
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Promo period from: Dec. 17, 2005 - Jan. 15, 2006
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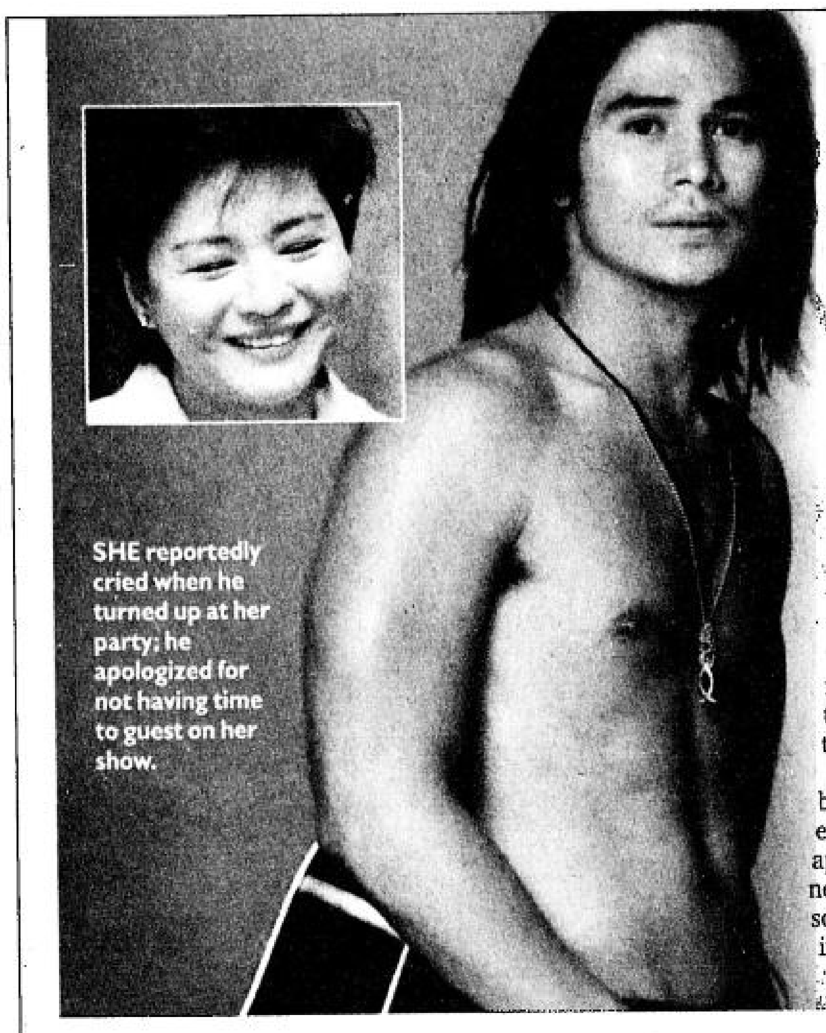


SHE reportedly cried when he turned up at her party; he apologized for not having time to guest on her show.

Piolo won't give up on Charo

By Nini Valera

PIOLO PASCUAL HAS ADMITTED THAT he had to apologize to Charo Santos-Concio, ABS-CBN senior vice president for Entertainment, for not being able to guest in the executive's long-running drama series, "Maalaala Mo Kaya."

In an exclusive interview with INQUIRER Entertainment on Friday, Piolo, 28, said he ran into Charo at a party for one of the network's clients the night before. "I think we're OK," he said.

People might be thinking they were "not OK," he said, after he had to beg off from appearing as a guest in a number of "Maalaala" episodes. INQUIRER Entertainment reported recently that Piolo had gotten on Charon's bad side as a result of that.

"I had to apologize to her during her birthday party last October," Piolo recounted. "She had [asked me several times] to appear in her show. But whenever I was needed for taping, I would always have something on, like a movie that I was shooting ... or, once, I had to go to Cannes (where his starrer, "Milan," was screened in the festival's new module, All Cinemas of the World).

"I think she had felt bad about that ... *nagtampo*." Charo reportedly cried when Piolo turned up at her birthday party.

The last time Piolo was considered for a role on "Maalaala" was for the episode about the founders of Max's restaurant chain. Since he had appeared in a series of Max ads, he would have been the perfect choice to play Maximo Gimenez, who opened the first Max's in 1945. Albert Martinez took the role.

Playing down alleged differences with ABS-CBN, Piolo said, "I never felt that there was anything wrong with my relationship with them."

Indeed, he is the star of the first movie that the network's film production outfit, Star Cinema, will release for 2006. Star Cinema is headed by Charo's sister, Malou Santos.

The movie, "Don't Give Up On Us," directed by Joyce Bernal, has the award-winning actor playing a romantic lead to Judy Ann Santos. The two teamed up three years ago for "Till There Was You."

In a press conference for the movie last Friday, Piolo, who portrays the folk singer Vince to Juday's advertising executive, said, "Judy Ann is more mature now, more confident about her decisions. She's more focused on her personal life, and more independent. Finally, the fighter in her has come out."

He admitted that they discussed limitations on intimate scenes before shooting them. "It was not like doing love scenes in our past movies where the only consideration was how comfortable we were with each other," he explained.

"Now that she's with Ryan [Agoncillo], I have to consider [his feelings]. In a way, I am protecting Juday, too. In a [romantic] partnership, the woman is more vulnerable."

Bernal claimed that "Don't Give Up On Us" was the hardest movie she had made so far.

"Like the fans of Judy Ann and Piolo, I wish for them to be together in real life," she said. "I feel the same way about Regine (Velasquez) and Aga (Muhlach). Even if I know that it could never happen, I still wish it would. That's the level I've reached as a fan of these love teams."

31st METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL

(INQUIRER Entertainment is running this MMFF guide to help moviegoers plan their holiday cinema tour. The festival opens on Dec. 25.)

'Kutob'

Stars Rica Peralejo, Marvin Agustin, Alessandra de Rossi, Andrea del Rosario, Liza Lorena, Anna Capri and Ryan Agoncillo
Directed by Jose Javier Reyes

The same actors and auteur behind two moneymakers in Metro Manila Film fests 2003 and 2004—"Malikmata" and "Spirit of the Glass"—reunite for yet another thriller. But writer-director Reyes says he took pains not to repeat himself here.

The first two films chronicled supernatural hauntings; this one tackles the horrors inflicted by an obsessed stalker (Agustin) on his hapless prey (Peralejo) and her friends (De Rossi and Agoncillo).

"The most frightening ghost is the one that is conjured by, and dwells inside, the mind," Reyes points out.

Reyes acknowledges that he was inspired by two spine-tingling classics of the genre—"Psycho" and "Se7en."

According to the drumbeaters: "Shots are in grand perspective and locations are meticulously researched to realize the director's vision."

Agustin confirms: "He aimed to scare people, not with special effects but with camera work, the storytelling, the basic tools in filmmaking."

But will good fortune come in threes for Reyes and his cast—in spite of the competition provided by another film fest horror franchise?

Reyes quips: "We are not 'shaken'; we are not 'rattled'; but I hope both films will be on a 'roll' at the tills." *Bayani San Diego Jr.*

Off to battle with CGIs

BONG REVILLA believes moviegoers deserve the best.

SCENES ON RADA street in the Makati business enclave, Legaspi Village, looked pretty much normal the past three months.

Unnoticed was the hum in the building where Ignite Media Inc. kept shop and produced record-breaking computer-generated special effects for the action fantasy film, "Tales From the Enchanted Kingdom: Exodus."

Working in batches 24/7, artists of this post-production company worked on a total of 1,000 individual shots to make "Exodus" a landmark sensory delight for viewers.

Thus, when theaters open on Christmas Day, "Exodus" will claim the record for the Filipino film with the most number of computer-generated images (CGIs) ever. About 70 percent of the film use CGIs. Previous local movies with special effects usually had, at most, 200 shots with computer contact.

The feature film, starring Sen. Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr. and directed by Erik Matti, is an ambitious project even for co-producers Imus Productions, a pioneer in fantasy film-making; Reality Entertainment, which has just started carving a niche in the same genre; Ignite Media and Enchanted Kingdom Inc.

Pouring in more than P70 million into the project, the three companies swear they left nothing to chance.

Ignite Media says it pushed itself "to the limit" in providing post-production requirements like picture and sound editing, sound design, dialogue replacement, foley and sound effects, digital color grading and visual effects.

Dave Hukom, chief executive officer, said Ignite did a lot of 3D animation to create small flying insects, vultures, the "manwits" or frog-like creatures, the "gabuns" or kamikaze flying creatures.

Computer technology likewise helped "implement the individual powers of both heroes and the villains," he said. "We used a lot of particles to make the scenes more believable. We added dust particles, light rays, lightning, fog, clouds. We also had 3D particles, like the petals seen falling in one scene."

In a separate interview, Revilla pointed out that "Exodus" has more CGIs than "Lord of the Rings." He said he believed in employing technology to please moviegoers, whom he described as "intelligent." They would no longer be duped into parting with hard-earned money to watch substandard movies, he pointed out.

Icing on the cake is the movie's social dimension. "Exodus" takes on current concerns, specifically the near-death of Mother Earth. Fantasy for a cause?

—With interviews by Nini Valera

The wind beneath Aguiluz's wings

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

RICHARD GUTIERREZ IS ALL set to fly high again as Aguiluz in the much-awaited "Mulawin the Movie." It's the sequel of GMA 7's top-rating *telefantasya* which is the epic story of Aguiluz and Alwina's (**Angel Locsin**) mission to save an entire race of half-bird half-human creatures from the dark forces of a renegade tribe.

The sequel begins in the couple's decision to embrace the mortal life and spend the rest of their days together, but their journey ends up in tragedy when their ship to Tierra Fuego (the land of man) gets caught in a violent storm. Separated at sea, they are washed ashore, devoid of their memories and alienated from one another. The fate of the Mulawin race once again depends on the valor and great love between Aguiluz and Alwina. But how can they save the Mulawins and rekindle their love for each other when they don't have any memory of their beginnings, nor the countless perils they faced to save each other's life in the past?

Free as a bird, Richard gamely answered my questions. But not without his beloved mom (Tita **Annabel Rama**) watching over him like a hawk. She is truly the wind beneath his wings as Richard continues to soar greater heights.

Aren't you wary about being up against two other fantasy movies ("Enteng Kabisote 2" and "Exodus") in the Metro Manila Film Festival?

I'd like to believe that all the films have something good to offer. "Enteng 1" was the top-grosser in last year's film fest. "Exodus" looks impressive, too. But the edge of "Mulawin" is that we already have a captive audience because of the popularity of the *telefantasya*. In addition, there's also an "Encantadia" portion in the film, which has a large following.

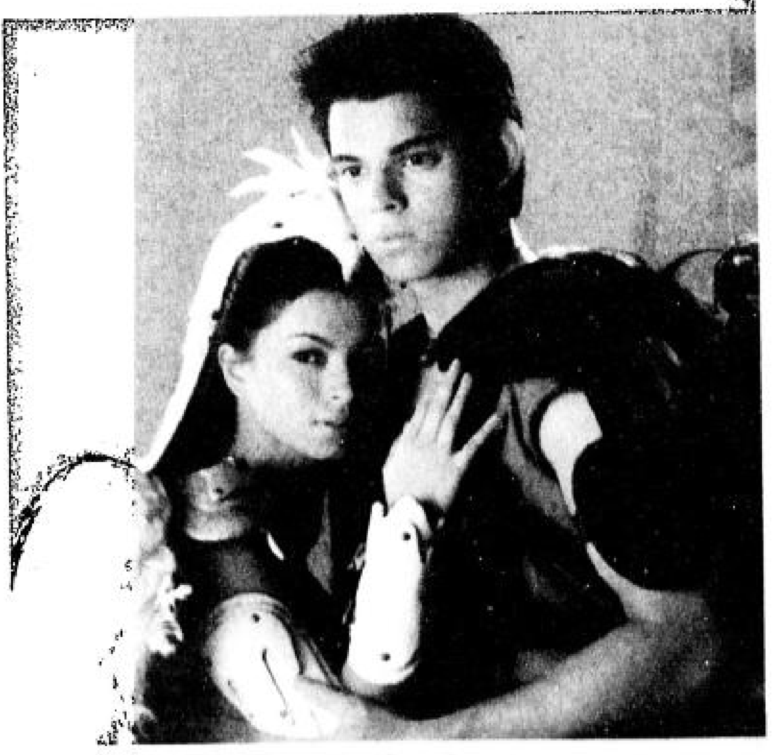
Angel and you have such a potent chemistry on screen. It's surprising that romance didn't develop between the two of you. Is that a remote possibility?

Our friendship has reached a different level already. Maybe our tandem works because we don't have the usual "lovers' quarrels" that other screen couples have. It's hard when you're a pair on and off screen. It's inevitable that your problems as a couple will get in the way of your work. Angel and I genuinely enjoy each other's company. We are very much at ease with each other and it shows in our scenes. I'm not closing the doors. Who knows? Anything can happen. But for now, I know she's happy with **Oyo Boy (Sotto)** and I'm happy for them.

What about you? How happy are you with your girlfriend Georgina (Wilson)?

Very happy. She's so supportive.

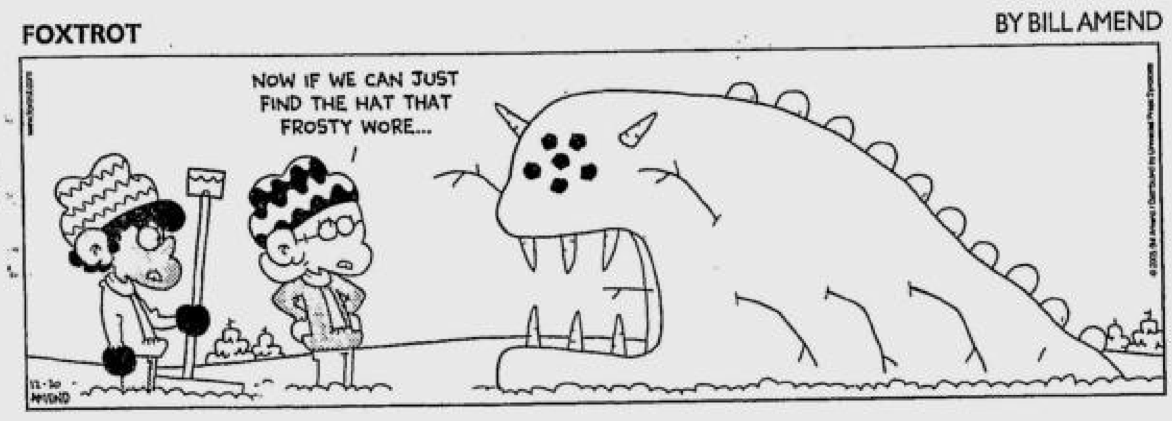
THE WIND/ A2-5



ANGEL has Oyo Boy; Richard has Georgina.

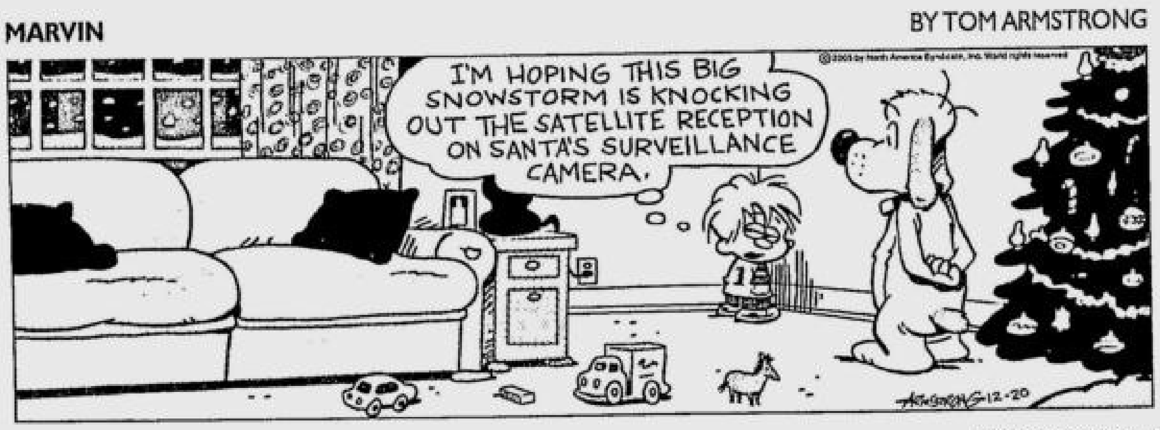
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


NOW IF WE CAN JUST FIND THE HAT THAT FROSTY WORE...
12-20 AMEND

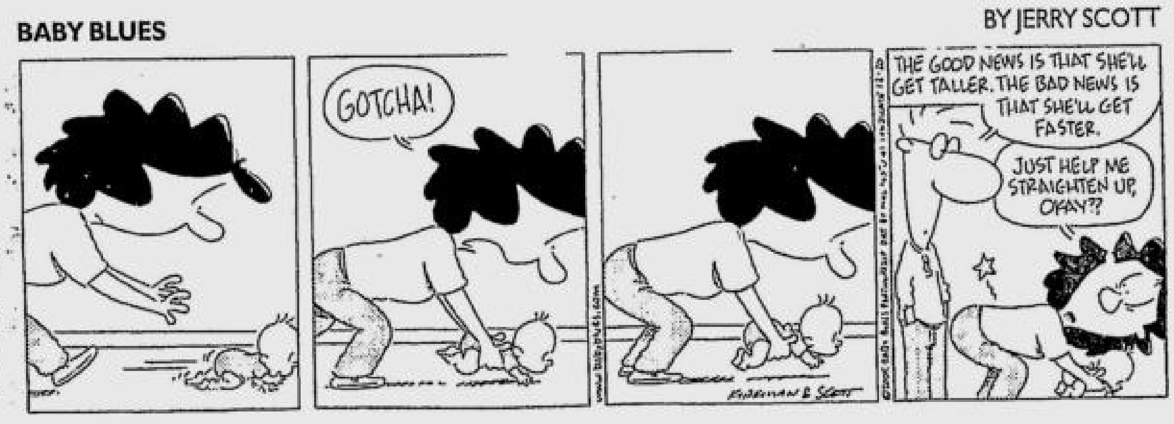
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


I'M HOPING THIS BIG SNOWSTORM IS KNOCKING OUT THE SATELLITE RECEPTION ON SANTA'S SURVEILLANCE CAMERA.
ARMSTRONG 12-20

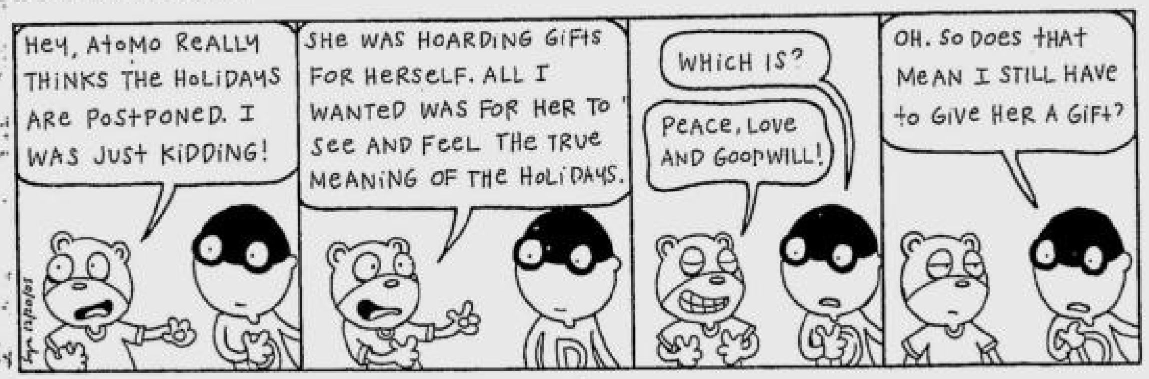
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


GOTCHA!
THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT SHE'LL GET TALLER. THE BAD NEWS IS THAT SHE'LL GET FASTER.
JUST HELP ME STRAIGHTEN UP, OKAY??
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Hey, Atomo Really thinks the Holidays are Postponed. I was just kidding!
She was hoarding gifts for herself. All I wanted was for her to see and feel the true meaning of the holidays.
Which is?
Peace, Love and Goodwill!
Oh. So does that mean I still have to give her a gift?

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You think, act and move quickly. You're broad-minded, tolerant and very much a visionary. You work hard! You appreciate the power of your own thoughts and how quickly they translate into action. You're a natural teacher. Construct and build things in the next year. You will achieve much, as will be evident in 2007.
Birthdate of: Billy Bragg, songwriter/humanitarian; Uri Geller, psychic/ telekinetic; Judy Lamarsh, journalist/ Canadian government official.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): This is an excellent day to make plans about travel, dealing with foreign countries, getting further education or anything to do with publishing and the media. You're taking a long-range view of things.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Today and tomorrow are excellent times to tackle red-tape details about estates, bills, inheritances, shared property, debt and taxes. Just roll up your sleeves and get down to it.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): This is an excellent day to talk to partners and close friends about long-range plans for the future. It's also a good day to sign contracts.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You can make great strides at work now. You're willing to take a long-range view of things. (You're good at this because whatever you do, you're generally in it for the long haul.)

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Parents and educators can make long-range plans that affect children today. Similarly, artists can discuss creative projects. It's also a good time to make plans about professional sports.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Now is the time to sit down and discuss family business. Focus on real estate deals or domestic matters. Get advice from someone older, if possible.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You're in a serious frame of mind both today and tomorrow. Participate in discussions with siblings and relatives. You'll cover a lot of ground about matters in the future.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): This is a good day for business. (So is tomorrow.) Whatever you buy today will be sensible, long-lasting and very practical. (You can't go wrong.)

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): This is a good day to talk to older people and get their feedback about things. More than any other sign, you appreciate the wisdom and experience older people have to offer.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Dealings with the government and large institutions (especially about long-range plans) might be quite successful today. Go forward and expect the best.

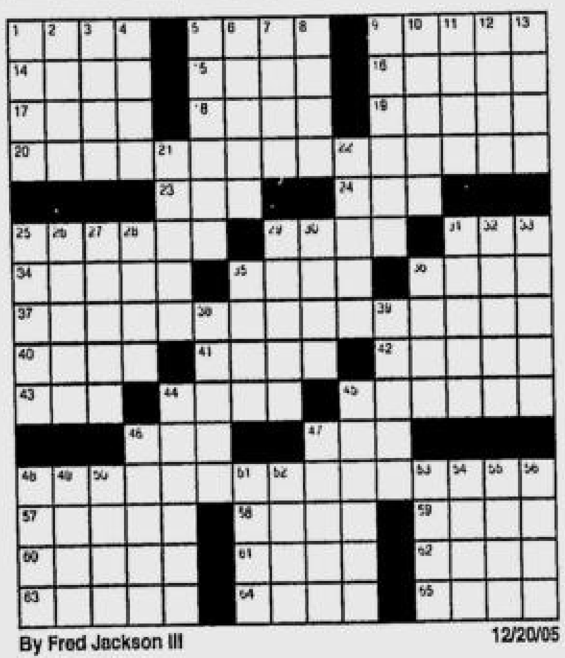
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): This is an excellent day to talk to people who are older or more experienced than you are. If you need wise, practical long-lasting advice, you'll get it!

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): This is a day to talk to bosses about your future expectations. It's also a good day to discuss plans that affect your career or long-range ventures at work.

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Fed. agents
5 Baloney
9 Skyscraper guts
14 Staff character
15 Aware of
16 Half a city in Washington
17 Jai __
18 Knock for a loop
19 "Hedda Gabler" playwright
20 Cut-to-commercials line
23 Spanish gold
24 Frozen over
25 Defogs
29 Maine port
31 Preferred one
34 Change prices
35 Slugger Sammy
36 Sinuous
37 Proceeding correctly
40 Palm Pilots, e.g.
41 Chills and fever
42 Stan's pal
43 Serpent sound
44 Lodges
45 Goes too fast
46 Brian of Roxy Music
47 Paris pal
48 Difficult problem
57 Protuberance
58 Transmission element
59 Prophetic sign
60 "Lou Grant" star
61 Fabled also-ran
62 Portend
63 Author of "The Cloister and the Hearth"
64 Alta equipment
65 __-Ball

DOWN
1 Grind teeth
2 Pigmented nevus
3 & others
4 Simon or Young
5 Defeated side
6 Lead-in
7 Needle case
8 Tune
9 Exchange
10 Striped cat
11 Designer Schiaparelli
12 Util. bill
13 Long, straight and limp
21 Comic pianist
22 Try to slug
25 Harvest haul
26 Imparts
27 Kett and James
28 Sounds of pleasure
29 Ersatz
30 U.S. Open stadium
31 Positive thinking man
32 Spanish hero
33 Little ones
35 Zodiac unit
36 First name in mysteries
38 Didn't stop
39 Something to talk about
44 "Where are you?" reply
45 Campfire delights
46 __ on (incited)
47 Arcade pioneer
48 Slope ride
49 River into The Wash
50 Arm bone
51 Cries of disgust
52 Ship wood
53 Sticks up
54 Out of control
55 Turn over
56 Tot seat



By Fred Jackson III
Pontiac, MI

12/20/05

Monday's Puzzle Solved

R	O	M	A	■	S	P	E	L	L	■	P	I	S	A
E	N	C	S	■	A	E	R	I	E	■	U	R	A	L
N	I	G	H	T	S	T	I	C	K	■	C	A	L	I
A	C	E	■	R	H	I	N	E	■	S	K	E	E	T
L	E	E	■	E	A	T	■	N	O	T	E	■	■	■
■	■	■	S	K	Y	E	■	S	P	A	R	K	L	E
L	A	R	K	S	■	■	N	E	U	T	E	R	E	D
A	S	I	A	■	A	C	H	E	S	■	D	I	N	G
P	A	S	T	O	R	A	L	■	■	D	U	S	T	Y
S	P	E	E	D	E	R	■	S	T	E	P	■	■	■
■	■	■	B	E	A	T	■	O	H	M	■	J	S	C
S	P	O	O	R	■	H	E	L	I	O	■	S	I	R
L	A	V	A	■	R	A	Z	O	R	B	L	A	D	E
O	V	E	R	■	E	G	R	E	T	■	A	G	E	E
P	E	N	D	■	B	E	A	D	Y	■	B	E	S	S

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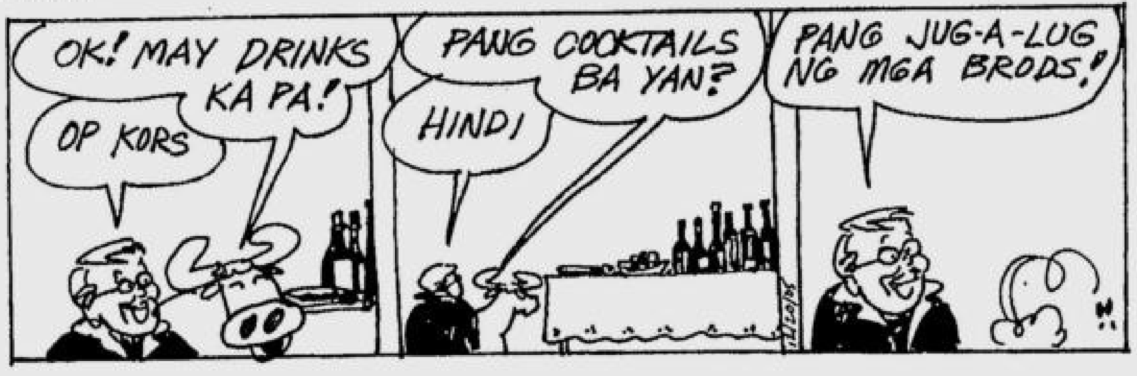
12/20/05

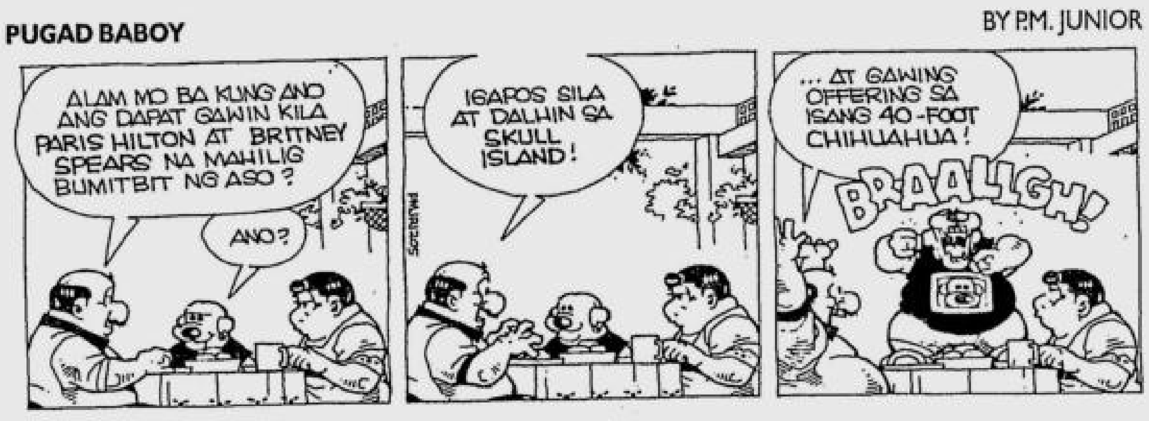
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


OK! MAY DRINKS KA PA!
OP KORS
PANG COCKTAILS BA YAN?
HINDI
PANG JUG-A-LUG NG MGA BRODS!

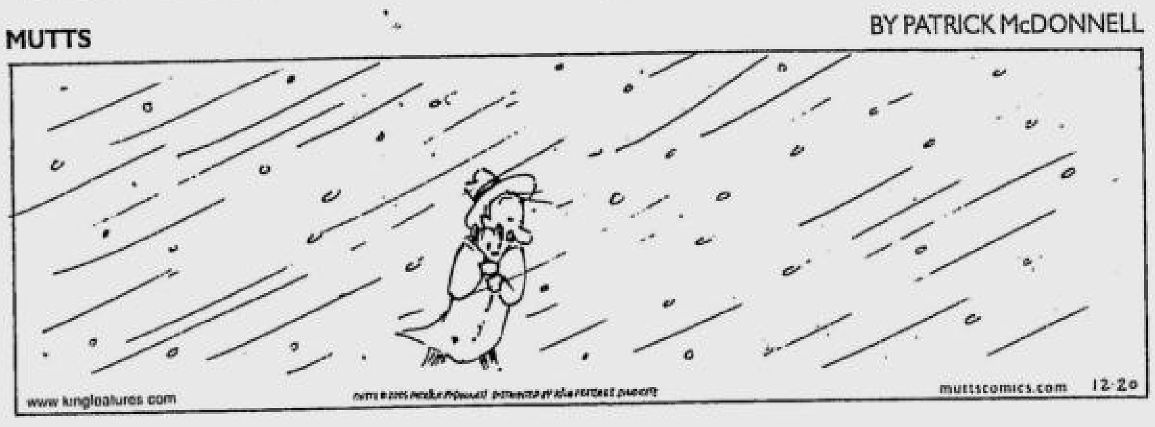
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


ALAM MO BA KUNG ANO ANG DAPAT GAWIN KILA PARIS HILTON AT BRITNEY SPEARS NA MAHILIG BUMITBIT NG ASO?
ANO?
IGAPOS SILA AT DALHIN SA SKULL ISLAND!
...AT GAWING OFFERING SA ISANG 40-FOOT CHIHUAHUA!
BRAAUGH!

MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL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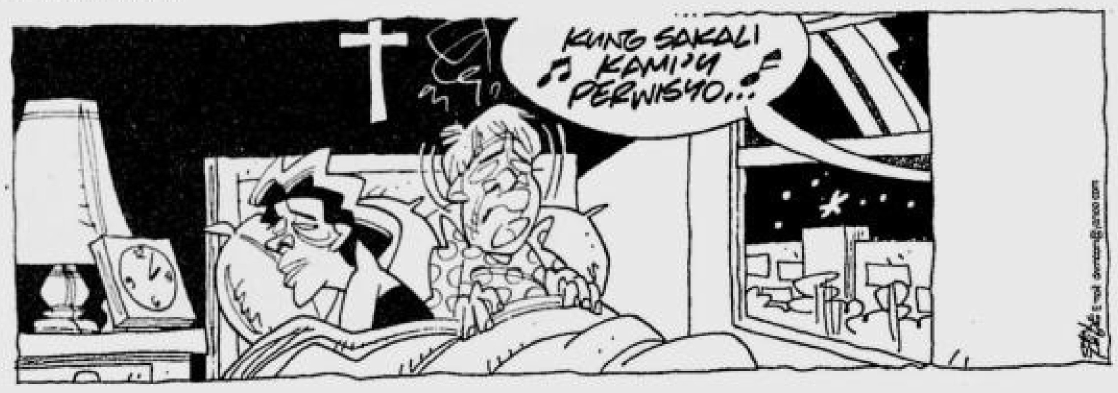
muttscomics.com 12-20

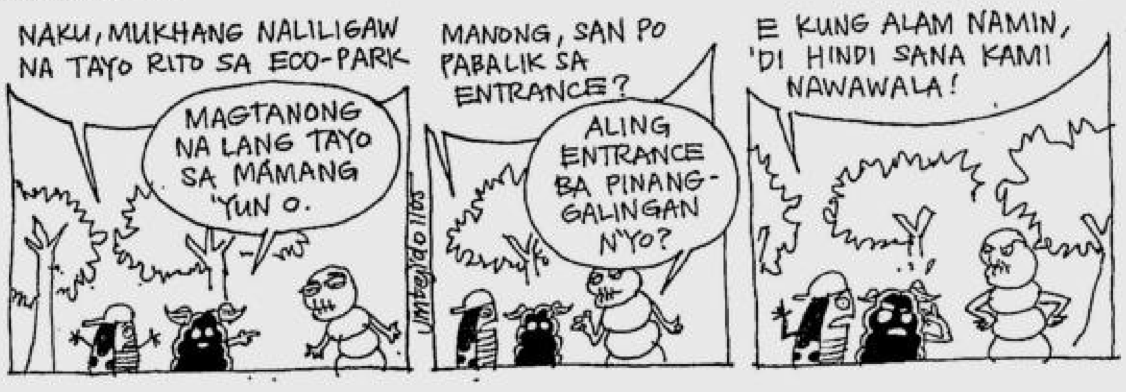
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


KUNG SAKALI KAMI'Y PERWISYO...

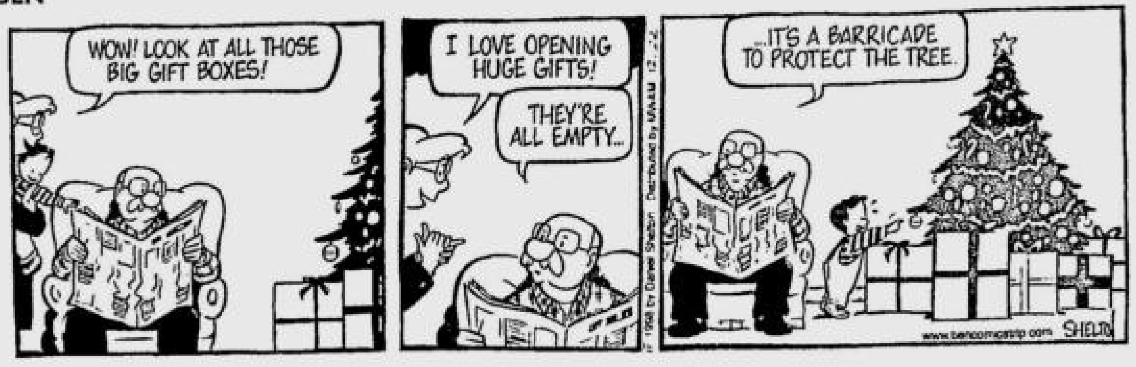
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


NAKU, MUKHANG NALILIGAW NA TAYO RITO SA ECO-PARK
MAGTANONG NA LANG TAYO SA MAMANG 'YUN O.
MANONG, SAN PO PABALIK SA ENTRANCE?
ALING ENTRANCE BA PINANGGALINGAN N'YO?
E KUNG ALAM NAMIN, 'DI HINDI SANA KAMI NAWAWALA!

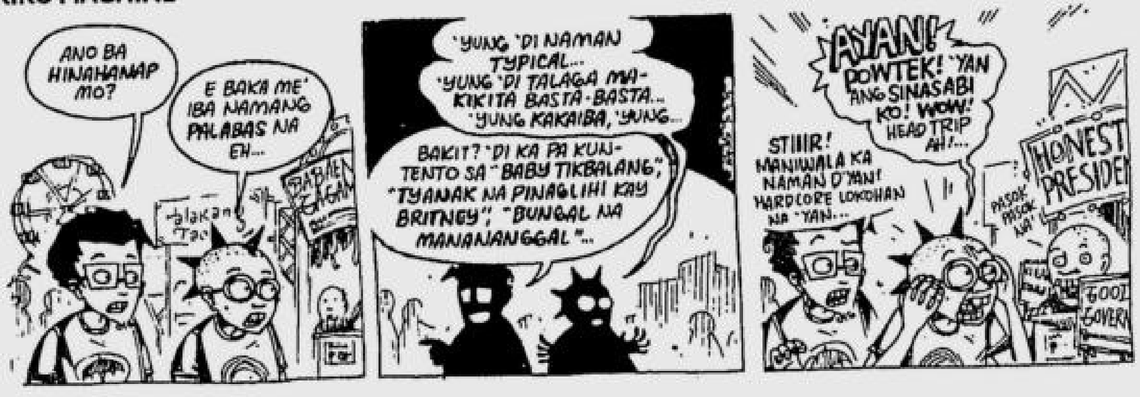
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


WOW! LOOK AT ALL THOSE BIG GIFT BOXES!
I LOVE OPENING HUGE GIFTS!
THEY'RE ALL EMPTY...
...IT'S A BARRICADE TO PROTECT THE TREE.
SHELTON

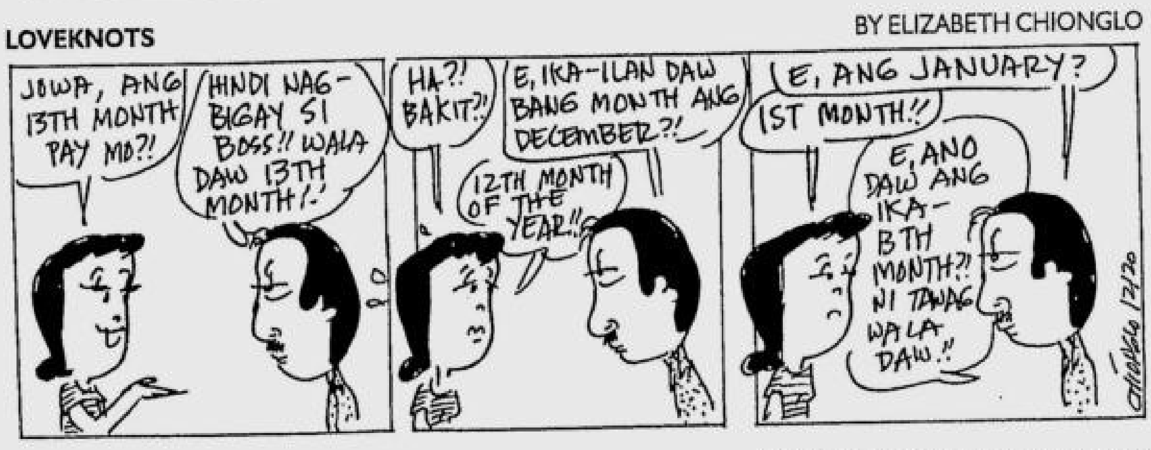
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


ANO BA HINAHANAP MO?
E BAKA ME' IBA NAMANG PALABAS NA EH...
'YUNG 'DI NAMAN TYPICAL... 'YUNG 'DI TALAGA MAKIKITA BASTA-BASTA... 'YUNG KAKAIBA, 'YUNG...
BAKIT? 'DI KA PA KUNTENTO SA "BABY TIKBALANG", "TYANAK NA PINAGLIHI KAY BRITNEY", "BUNGAL NA MANANANGGAL"...
AYAN! POWTEK! 'YAN ANG SINASABI KO! WOW! HEAD TRIP AH!...
STIIIR! MANIWALA KA NAMAN D'YAN! HARDCORE LOKOHAN NA 'YAN...
HONEST PRESIDENT
PASOK PASOK NA!

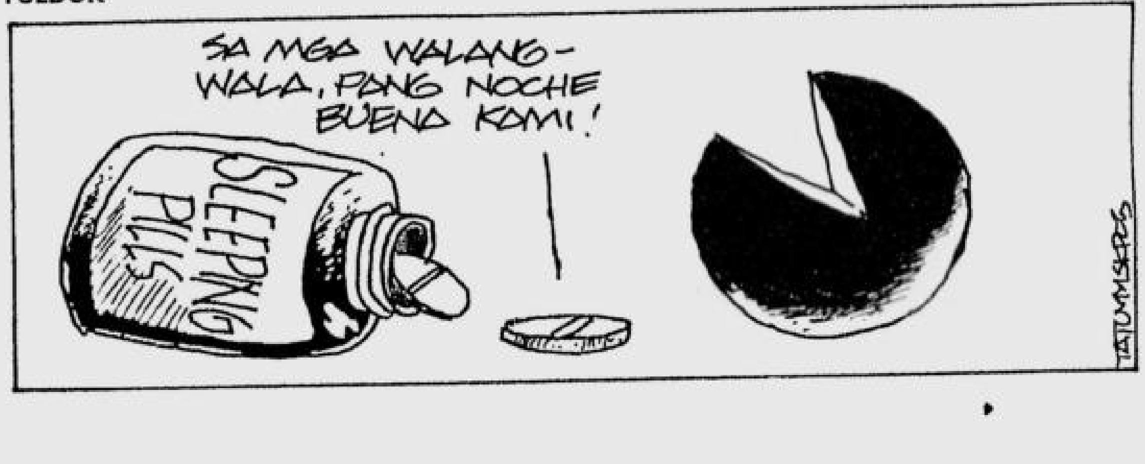
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


JOWA, ANG 13TH MONTH PAY MO?!
HINDI NAG-BIGAY SI BOSS!! WALA DAW 13TH MONTH!
HA?! BAKIT?!
E, IKA-ILAN DAW BANG MONTH ANG DECEMBER?!
12TH MONTH OF THE YEAR!!
E, ANG JANUARY?
1ST MONTH!!
E, ANO DAW ANG IKA-13TH MONTH?! NI TAWAG WALA DAW!!
CHIONGLO 12/20

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


SA MGA WALANG-WALA, PANG NOCHE BUENA KAMI!
SLEEPING PILLS
TATUMSEROS

New movies for established stars

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

Even big H'wood stars can't afford to rest on their laurels

WHEN STARS ESTABLISH THEMSELVES AS bankable names in the global film biz, they enjoy the special perks of stellar fame and fortune that most people can only dream of.

Ironically, however, they can't afford to rest on their laurels, and have to be constantly on the lookout for new projects that can sustain their careers upward trajectory, all the way to the top.

A few wrong moves and failed movies, and even big stars could end up as has-beens. This almost happened event to **Julia Roberts**, until she regained lost ground with "Erin Brokovich." After that frighteningly close shave, **Roberts** now chooses her stellar vehicles very judiciously, indeed.

Nicolas Cage has also experienced some low points in his career, so he's angling for a strong recovery with his new film, "Ghost Rider." The project rides on the current popularity of "supernatural" stories, and hedges its bets further with an action component. Will the unlikely mix work?

In the film, **Cage** plays a stunt cyclist who saves his dying father by selling his soul to Mephistopheles. Years later, Johnny's path crosses again with the devilish creature, who offers to release his soul if he becomes the fiery Ghost Rider, a supernatural agent of vengeance and justice.

Tom Cruise's next movie gambit is much less iffy: He's starring in the third installment of the very popular "Mission Impossible" film franchise—and it's expected that he'll make more than $60 million from his participation as star-producer in the action-adventure thriller, which could end up as one of the biggest hits of 2006.

Also riding high is **Tom Hanks**, who's top-billing the controversial "The Da Vinci Code" movie.

The film begins with a murder in the Louvre Museum in Paris. Near the body, the police have found a baffling cipher.

While trying to solve the enigmatic riddle, **Hank**'s character, Harvard symbologist Robert Langdon, is stunned to discover that it leads to a trail of clues hidden in the paintings of **Leonardo Da Vinci**.

Langdon joins forces with French cyrptologist Sophie Neveau (Audrey Tautou) and learns that the murder victim, a curator, was involved in the Priory of Sion, a secret society whose members include **Da Vinci**, **Sir Isaac Newton** and **Victor Hugo**.

In a race through Europe, the investigators match wits with a faceless powerbroker who seems to anticipate their every move. Unless they can decipher the labyrinthine puzzle in time, the Priory's ancient secret will be lost forever.

The film project's controversial nature could be good for its box office, and thus for Hawk's stellar career—but, if it proves to be too controversial and turns off some Christian viewers, it could have a counterproductive effect.

On a much lighter note, in his new film, "Click," **Adam Sandler** plays a workaholic architect who finds a universal remote that allows him to fast-forward or rewind to different parts of his life.

Complications arise when the remote starts to overrule his choices.

In "RV," a family comedy, **Robin Williams** is cast as the head of a dysfunctional family. They rent an RV and head for the Rockies, ending up in a campground community.

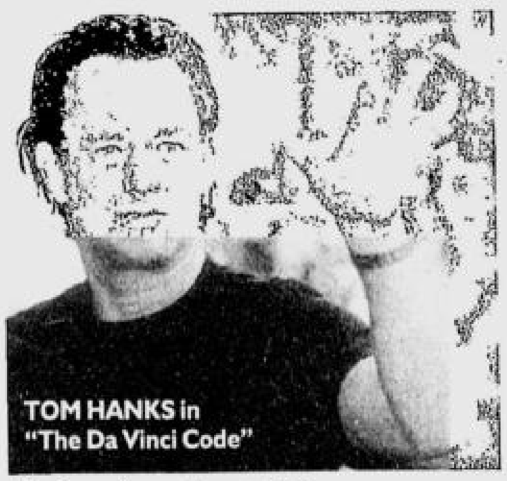
Finally, **Jim Carrey** plays it brash and breezy in "Fun with Dick and James." When the company his character works for becomes involved in a scandal and he is confronted with the prospect of losing everything, he and his wife (**Tea Leoni**) are forced to beg, borrow and steal to get it all back.

'The Bourne Supremacy'

Matt Damon's spy saga, "The Bourne Supremacy," will be screened at 8 p.m., Dec. 25, on HBO. The film reintroduces Jason Bourne (**Damon**) and his girlfriend Marie (**Franka Potente**). Their peaceful existence in a sleepy seaside village is ended when a CIA operative appears, and Jason and Marie have to run away.

World Pyro 'Olympics'

The world's best in pyrotechnics will compete in the Philippines from Dec. 26 to 30 in the World Pyro Olympics. Teams from countries like the USA, Russia, China and the United Arab Emirates will set up over 8,000 shells on barges 300 feet from the breakwater of the Esplanade in Pasay City. The tilt will introduce new developments in pyrotechnic technology, and showcase Filipino fireworks displays.



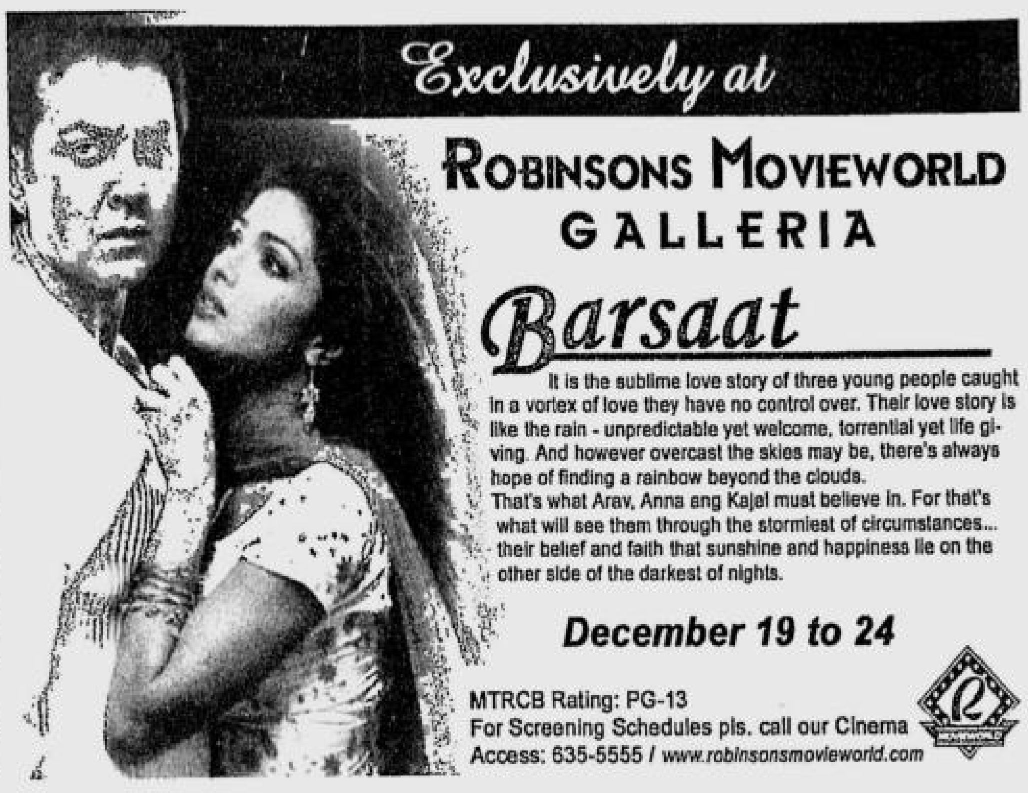
TOM HANKS in "The Da Vinci Code"

'Zathura' sneak preview

The sci-fi film, "Zathura: A Space Adventure," is holding special sneak previews until Dec. 21 in selected theaters. The movie stars **Tim Robbins** and talented child actors **Josh Hutcherson** and **Jonah Bobo**.

The boys plays squabbling brothers who are propeled into deepest, darkest space while playing a mysterious board game. They must work together to complete the game, or they will be trapped in outer space forever.

BYE... FOR NOW! There will be no romantic reunion—Jessica Simpson filed for divorce from former boy band star Nick Lachey. The couple jointly announced their separation Nov. 23 following months of rumors that their tabloid-friendly relationship had soured. AP



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December 19 to 24

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1	KING KONG	PG13	10:20, 1:55, 5:35, 9:15
2	KING KONG	PG13	12:35, 4:15, 7:55

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NOW SHOWING

Cinema	Film	Rating	Times
3	FAMILY STONE	PG13	10:45, 1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00
4	KING KONG	PG13	10:50, 2:30, 6:10, 9:50
5	KING KONG	PG13	11:25, 3:05, 6:45, 10:25

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February 3 & 4	NINA&NYOY	9PM

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Cinema	Film
1 (DOLBY)	KING KONG PG13
2 (DOLBY)	KING KONG PG13
3 (DOLBY)	KING KONG PG13
4 (DOLBY)	FAMILY STONE PG13
PREMIERE (DOLBY)	KING KONG PG13

Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72

Cinema	Film
1 (DDS)	KING KONG
2 (SDDS)	KING KONG
3 (DTS)	KING KONG
4 GOLD (DTS)	FAMILY STONE (SNEAK PREVIEW)
5 GOLD (DOLBY)	KING KONG
6 GOLD (SDDS)	KING KONG
7 GOLD (DOLBY)	CHICKEN LITTLE
8	EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
9	BEAUTIFUL BOXER (SNEAK PREVIEW)
10	HARRY POTTER-4

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City)
tel 687.6963 or 72

Cinema	Film
1 (DOLBY)	KING KONG
2 (DOLBY)	KING KONG
3 (DOLBY)	KING KONG
4 (DOLBY)	KING KONG

CINEMA 2000
Movie Theatres of the New Millenium

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383

Cinema	Film
1	KING KONG
2 (DTS)	KING KONG
3 (DOLBY)	KING KONG
4	JUST LIKE HEAVEN

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel. (049) 4111146

Cinema	Film
1	JUST LIKE HEAVEN
2 (DOLBY)	KING KONG
3 (DTS)	KING KONG
4	KING KONG

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771

Cinema	Film
1	KING KONG
2	EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 (DOLBY)	KING KONG

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729

Cinema	Film
1	GHOST INSIDE
2	IN HER SHOES
3 (DOLBY)	THE MYTH
4 (DTS)	THE FOG

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320

Cinema	Film
1	KING KONG
2	KING KONG
3 (DOLBY)	KING KONG

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Gapan)

Cinema	Film
1	GRAND OPENING DEC. 16. KING KONG
2	CINEMA 2 OPENS ON DEC. 25, 2005 "EXODUS" & ENTENG KABISOTE

CINEMA 2000
Cinema 2000 Waltermart Makati
Waltermart Center, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Antonio Arnaiz Pio del Pilar, Makati City
Tel 816.4214 / 816.4216

Cinema	Film
1	KING KONG
2	KING KONG
3	KING KONG
4	KING KONG

Blue Wave MARIKINA
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sto. Niño, Marikina City tel. 9341927

Cinema	Film
1 (DOLBY)	KING KONG
2	FAMILY STONE (SNEAK PREVIEW)
3 (DOLBY)	KING KONG
4 (DOLBY)	KING KONG

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
tel 7334228

Cinema	Film
1 (DOLBY)	KING KONG
2	KING KONG
3	BEAUTIFUL BOXER (SNEAK PREVIEW)
4	FAMILY STONE (SNEAK PREVIEW)
5	LOLLIPOP & ROSES

starmall Movies
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Mandaluyong) tel. 7266150

Cinema	Film
3	LOLLIPOP & ROSES
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX)	KING KONG
5	THE FOG

MARKETPLACE
Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856

Cinema	Film
1	KING KONG
2	THE FOG
3	THE MYTH
4	RESERVED

METROPOLIS star
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(ALABANG) tel. 8504285, 5433994

Cinema	Film
1	WEREWOLF GINGERSNAPS-2
2	LOLLIPOP & ROSES
3	KING KONG
4	HARRY POTTER-4

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 , 833.3274

Cinema	Film
1	LOLLIPOP & ROSES
2	THE FOG
3	THE MYTH

Center Mall Cinema
Baguio Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue
(Baguio City) tel (074)- (4449346)

Cinema	Film
1	KING KONG
2	KING KONG

THEATRES
NE Pacific Mall Cabanatuan, Telephone No (044) 600-3026

Cinema	Film
1	KING KONG
2	EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3	KING KONG

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03

Cinema	Film
1 (DOLBY EX)	KING KONG
2	MY LITTLE BRIDE
3 (DTS EX)	KING KONG
4	EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE

Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4748

Cinema	Film
1	IN HER SHOES
2	THE MYTH

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276

Cinema	Film
1 (SDDS)	WEREWOLF GINGER SNAP-2
2	MASARAP ANG UNANG KAGAT
3	LOLLIPOP & ROSES
4 (DTS)	UNDERWORLD

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202

Cinema	Film
1 (DOLBY)	KING KONG
2	HULA MO HULI KO
3 (DTS)	JUST LIKE HEAVEN
4	LOLLIPOP & ROSES
5	HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121

Cinema	Film
1	ABNORMAL BEAUTY
2	EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 (DOLBY)	KING KONG
4 (DTS)	KING KONG

Cinemagic Pacific Mall
(Lucena City) tel. 6605271

Cinema	Film
1	THE MYTH
2	KING KONG
3	
4	

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489

Cinema	Film
1	HARI NG SABLAY
2	EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 (DOLBY)	KING KONG
4 (DTS)	KING KONG

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790

Cinema	Film
1	MAHAROT
2	KING KONG
3	MY LITTLE BRIDE
4	KING KONG

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007

Cinema	Film
1	THE MYTH
2	CHICKEN LITTLE

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029

Cinema	Film
1	THE MYTH
2	[illegible] NANANABIK

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GALLERIA [illegible]

1 KING KONG • THX
11:30 3:10 6:50 10:30

2 KING KONG
12:40 4:20 8:00

3 KING KONG
1:10 4:50 8:30

4 KING KONG
1:40 5:20 9:00

5 KING KONG
11:00 2:40 6:20 10:00

6 THE FAMILY STONE
Sneak Preview

7 BARSAAT
KISNA

8 THE FOG
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

9 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
1:10 3:20 5:30 7:40 9:50

10 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
Sneak Preview

ERMITA [illegible]-7809 [illegible]

1 KING KONG
1:50 5:20 8:50

2 THE FAMILY STONE
Sneak Preview

3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
12:00 2:00 4:00 6:00 8:00 10:00

4 KING KONG
11:20 2:50 6:20 9:50

5 KING KONG
11:20 2:50 6:20 9:50

6 KING KONG
12:20 3:50 7:20

7 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
Sneak Preview

METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8199

1 THE FAMILY STONE
Sneak Preview

2 KING KONG
10:25 2:10 5:50 9:40

3 KING KONG
2:10 5:55 9:40

4 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
12:20 2:30 4:40 6:50 9:00

5 THE FOG
1:50 4:15 6:40 9:05

6 KING KONG
5:15 9:00

7 KING KONG
1:30 5:15 9:00

8 THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
12:00 2:15 4:30 6:45 9:00

NOVALICHES 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

1 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
2 THE FAMILY STONE Sneak Preview
3 KING KONG
4 THE FOG
5 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
6 BEAUTIFUL BOXER Sneak Preview

CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2578

1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

PIONEER 687-5376

1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 BEAUTIFUL BOXER Sneak Preview
4 THE FAMILY STONE Sneak Preview

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STA ROSA (049) 837-0907

1 KING KONG
2 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
3 IN HER SHOES
4 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
5 KING KONG

LIPA (043) 757-3664 / (043) 312-5870

1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET OF FIRE
4 THE FOG

DASMARINAS (046) 852-2125 / (046) 416-4332

1 KING KONG
2 THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 KING KONG
4 THE FOG

ANGELES (045) 892-2348

1 KING KONG
2 THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 THE FOG
4 KING KONG

IMUS (046) 875-3838 / (046) 471-8188

1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 IN HER SHOES
4 THE FOG
5 THE FAMILY STONE Sneak Preview

STARMILLS (045) 875-1927 / (045) 961-8270

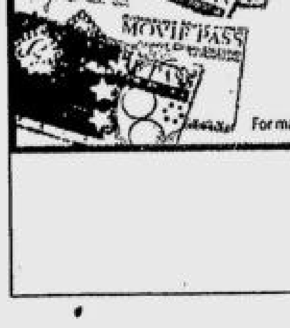
1 THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
2 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
3 THE FOG
4 KING KONG
5 KING KONG
6 KING KONG

BACOLOD (034) 441-0463 / (034) 441-0489

1 KING KONG
2 THE FOG
3 KING KONG
4 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
5 CHICKEN LITTLE
6 THE MYTH

ILOILO (033) [illegible]

1 KING KONG
2 THE FOG
3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
4 THE MYTH
5 KING KONG



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December 23 - 25, 30, 2005
Christmas Fireworks Display
December 23, 25, 30 & 31, 2005; 9PM

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Cinema	No.	Film	Note
G1 GLORIETTA 1	1	THE FOG	
	2	KINGKONG	
	3	ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS	
	4	AN UNFINISHED LIFE	
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1	JUST LIKE HEAVEN	
	2	HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE	
	3 THX	KINGKONG	GUARANTEED SEATS
	4	KISS KISS BANG BANG	
	5	CHICKEN LITTLE	
	6	KINGKONG	
	7	IN HER SHOES	
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1	ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS	
	2	KINGKONG	
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX	KINGKONG	GUARANTEED SEATS
	2 THX	KINGKONG	GUARANTEED SEATS
	3	IN HER SHOES	GUARANTEED SEATS
	4	KISS KISS BANG BANG	GUARANTEED SEATS
	5	JUST LIKE HEAVEN	GUARANTEED SEATS
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX	KINGKONG.	
	2	KINGKONG	
	3	JUST LIKE HEAVEN	
	4	IN HER SHOES	
	5	THE FOG	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1	KINGKONG	
	2	KINGKONG	
	3	JUST LIKE HEAVEN	
	4	THE FOG	

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- GARY THOMPSON, PHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS

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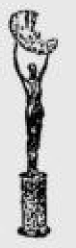
-- SEAN O'CONNELL, CHARLOTTE WEEKLY



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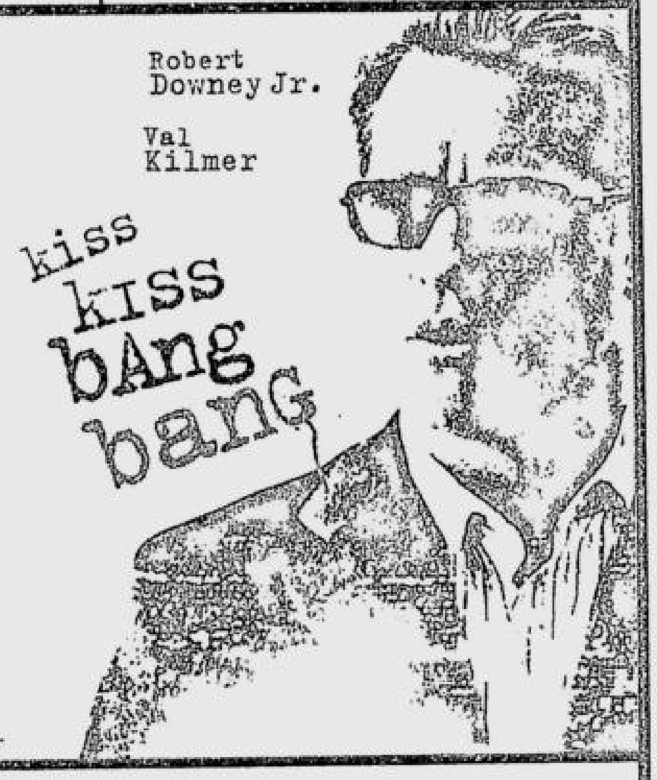

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③ JUST LIKE HEAVEN
④ KINGKONG
⑤ THE FOG

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The fun is in the finds

Holiday Fireworks Show

November 20, 27
December 4, 11, 18 and 25
7 pm at the Playzone

Market! Market! Simbang Gabi
at the 5th level lobby
Dec. 15 - 23, 6:30 pm

The wind beneath Aguiluz's wings

From page A2-1

CIARA Sotto

She's not *selosa*. When it's time for me to work, she just lets me be. Sometimes she drops by on the set but she's not the type who'll make *bantay* or keep checking on me.

Will she be Mrs. Richard Gutierrez someday soon?

Marriage is the farthest thing from my mind (smiles). I still have so many goals to accomplish.

Like what goals?

Next year I plan to go full blast with my Iced Out productions. I'm producing my brother's album. We will have more car shows and also charity events.

What are your plans this Christmas? Any gifts for yourself?

Of course I'll spend it with my family, even if I already live on my own. I plan to have our house in White Plains renovated. That's my gift to my mom and dad. For myself, I want to buy a new car (Hummer).

What's the best advice your mom has given you? Do you follow everything she says?

To always thank God for all blessings. *Masunurin naman akong anak* . I never rebelled. I wouldn't be where I am now if I didn't listen to my mom. Mother knows best *talaga*!

Are you vain?

Not at all. I don't spend hours in front of the mirror. I just take care of my body by going to the gym because I need to.

If you were a bird just like Aguiluz, what kind would you be and why?

An eagle. It flies steadily and observes everything closely. Once it finds its prey, it becomes aggressive and attacks.

Does that mean you're aggressive ... with women?

I'm aggressive when it comes to my goals (laughs).

Chanteuse Ciara

FROM being a teen sensation to a classical pop chanteuse, **Ciara Sotto** is back with a new album (under Sony BMG), "The Way of Love," this time taking on classic romantic standards. Recorded for over a year, the album includes songs like "All I See is You," "Ebb Tide," "Moon River," "All the Things You Are," " Noche de Ronda" and "You Don't Own Me," among others.

I teased Ciara, "Which song in the album best describes the state of your heart right now?" She laughed, "Climb Every Mountain." I countered, "Why, has love been tough for you?" She turned pensive. "*No naman*. I'm still searching."

When the name of her ex, **John Lloyd Cruz**, cropped up, she became evasive. So I asked about **Paolo Ballesteros** instead. Her eyes lit up. "I don't want to assume things when it comes to Paolo and me," she said. "He's not courting me formally but I can feel his concern. I don't believe in MU. In some ways, I'm an old-fashioned girl who wants to be wooed and told that she's loved."

Young as she is, the old soul in her gave a different spin, for sure, to the timeless classics in her album.

'Tahanang Pinoy's' kitchen

TIRED of watching the usual dance and singing shows on Sunday mornings? Dig up the TV remote, enter a haven of style and comfort, and feel transported with **RJ Ledesma**, Architect **Gelo Manosa** and **Aizza Gonzales** this Sunday on Scribbleworks' award winning show, "Tahanang Pinoy" at 11 a.m. on ABC 5.

Now comes a new kitchen segment, "Cocina Argentina." Feast on the different styles and courses of Chef Christina's cuisine as she shares her talents in creating mouthwatering dishes.

Homecoming concert

THE WORLD-renowned Philippine Madrigal Singers is set to spread Yuletide cheer as the group stages "Home For Christmas—A Homecoming Concert of the Philippine Madrigal Singers" on Dec. 20 and 21, Tuesday and Wednesday, 7:30 p.m. at the CCP Little Theater. The concert will showcase the group's trademark singing style that has enthralled audiences worldwide. Aside from well-loved Christmas songs, they have prepared a special repertoire that highlights their musical virtuosity—from classical songs to the latest pop hits and even some novelty numbers. Call **Mylene Misolas**, 724-1810, 20, 30 or 40, or 0917-8362923.

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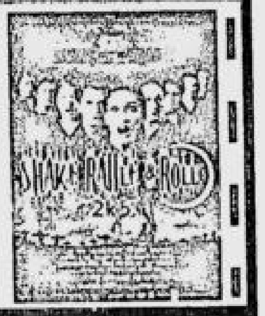

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1 KING KONG
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1 KING KONG
11:40FS/12:10MF/03:50
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1 KING KONG
12:20FS/01:40MF/05:05
08:15LFS/08:30LMF/11:35END
2 KING KONG
11:00FS/11:15MF/02:40/06:05
09:13LFS/09:30LMF/12:35END
3 KING KONG
10:35FS/10:45MF/02:10/05:35
08:43LFS/09:00LMF/12:05END

METRO MANILA

SM MEGAMALL
1 KING KONG
2 MERRY CHRISTMAS
3 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
4 THE FOG
5 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
6 THE FAMILY STONE
7 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
8 KING KONG
9 KING KONG
10 KING KONG
11 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
12 THE MAN

SM CITY STA. MESA
1 KING KONG
2 THE FOG
3 KING KONG
4 FAMILY STONE
5 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
6 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
7 MERRY CHRISTMAS
8 THE MAN
9 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
10 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE

SM CITY BICUTAN
1 KING KONG
2 FAMILY STONE
3 THE MAN
4 KING KONG

SM VALENZUELA NOW OPEN
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
4 FAMILY STONE

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
1 FAMILY STONE
2 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
3 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
4 KING KONG
5 HARI NG SABLAY
6 THE FOG
7 KING KONG
8 KING KONG
9 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
10 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
11 CHICKEN LITTLE
12 THE MAN

SM CITY SOUTHMALL
1 KING KONG
2 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
6 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
7 THE MAN
8 THE FOG
9 FAMILY STONE
10 BEAUTIFUL BOXER

SM SUPERCENTER SUCAT
1 THE MAN
2 KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 FAMILY STONE

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 MERRY CHRISTMAS
4 THE MAN
5 THE FOG
6 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
7 KING KONG
8 FAMILY STONE

SM CITY MANILA
1 FAMILY STONE
2 KING KONG
3 THE FOG
4 KING KONG
5 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
6 KING KONG
7 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
8 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
9 KING KONG
10 KING KONG
11 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
12 THE MAN

SM SAN LAZARO
1 FAMILY STONE
2 KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 THE MAN
5 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
6 THE FOG

LUZON

SM CITY PAMPANGA
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 HARI NG SABLAY
5 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
6 KING KONG

SM CITY BAGUIO
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 THE MAN
4 KING KONG

SM MOLINO NOW OPEN
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 THE FOG
4 IN HER SHOES

SM CITY BACOOR
1 THE MAN
2 THE FOG
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 KING KONG
6 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
7 FAMILY STONE
8 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE

SM CITY MARILAO
1 KING KONG
2 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
3 AN UNFINISHED LIFE
4 KING KONG

SM CITY DASMARINAS
1 KING KONG
2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG

SM CITY LUCENA
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 AN UNFINISHED LIFE
4 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE

SM CITY BATANGAS
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
4 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

SM CITY CEBU
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
5 THE FOG
6 THE MYTH
7 KING KONG
8 KING KONG

SM CITY ILOILO
1 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
2 RESERVED
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 KING KONG
6 THE FOG
7 RESERVED
8 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS

SM CITY DAVAO
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
4 THE FOG
5 KING KONG
6 KING KONG

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 THE MYTH
4 KING KONG

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2	KINGKONG	11:30, 3:20, 7:10, 11:00	PG-13
3	KINGKONG	12:40, 4:30, 8:20	PG-13
4	KINGKONG	1:50, 5:40, 9:30	PG-13

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KING KONG PG13 1:40,5:10,8:40	KING KONG PG13 2:25,5:55,9:25	THE FAMILY STONE PG13 12:30,2:55,5:20,7:45,10:10
KING KONG PG13 1:00,4:30,8:00	KING KONG PG13 12:20,3:50,7:20	KING KONG PG13 3:10,6:40,10:10

ADVANCE SCREENING – FAMILY STONE ON DEC. 19 & 20 (MONDAY & TUESDAY)

SHANG CINEPLEX
① KING KONG
MTRCB. PG-13
12 30, 4:15, 8.00 PM
③ KING KONG
MTRBC PG-13
2 30, 6 15, 10 00 PM
② KING KONG
MTRCB PG-13
1 30, 5.15, 9 00 PM
④ FAMILY STONE
MTRCB. PG-13
PREMIERE THEATRE KING KONG
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KING KONG 10:50 / 11:25 / 12:00 / 12:35 / 1:50 2:25 / 3:00 / 3:35 / 4:10 5:25 / 6:00 / 6:35 / 7:10 7:45 / 9:00 / 9:35 / 10:10	GLOBE PLATINUM CINEMA KING KONG 1:50 / 5:25 / 9:00 FAMILY STONE 1:30 / 4:10 / 6:50 / 9:30 THE FOG 12:20 / 2:40 / 5:00 / 7:20 / 9:40
JUST LIKE HEAVEN 12:40 / 2:50 / 5.00 / 7:10 / 9:20	...MAXIMO OLIVEROS 12:50 / 3:00 / 5:10 / 7:20 / 9:30

ALI MALL CINEMAS

❶ KING KONG 12:25 / 4:00 / 7:35	❹ BEAUTIFUL BOXER 12:10 / 2:50 / 5:30 / 8:10
❷ HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET 12:00 R4 / 2:00 / 5:00 / 8:00	❺ THE MYTH 12.45 / 3:15 / 5:45 / 8:20
❸ IN HER SHOES 12:30 / 3:10 / 5:50 / 8:30	DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS

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ADB expects 4.8% growth for RP in '06

Gov't more optimistic, sees 5.7-6.3% expansion

By Doris C. Dumlao and Michelle V. Remo

THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK SEES THE Philippines and the rest of East Asia remaining resilient in 2006, aided by the likely turnaround in global demand for electronics, recovery in Japan's domestic demand and continued strong growth by China.

In its Asia Economic Monitor released yesterday, the ADB projected that the Philippine domestic economy would grow by 4.7 percent this year and 4.8 percent next year, alongside emerging East Asia which was seen posting a gross domestic product (GDP) of 5.3 percent next year, higher than the estimated 4.6 percent for this year.

Including the region's economic powerhouse China, East Asia was seen expanding by 7.2 percent in 2006 or broadly the same as the likely growth this year.

The AEM is a semi-annual review of East Asia's growth, financial and corporate sector restructuring, and emerging policy issues, covering the 10 member-countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations plus the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Korea.

"The external environment facing emerging East Asia softened somewhat this year, with the US and the European area posting lower growth than last year. International oil prices continued to rise and global demand for IT products eased in the early part of the year," the ADB said.

It noted that the weaker external environment had adversely affected the region's exports as well as economic growth. Following a very rapid 7.6-percent GDP growth last year, the ADB said emerging East Asia was likely to have experienced a somewhat slower, but still robust, growth of 7.1 percent in 2005.

Much of this year's moderation in growth occurred in the five biggest Asean economies, while mainland China continued to grow robustly.

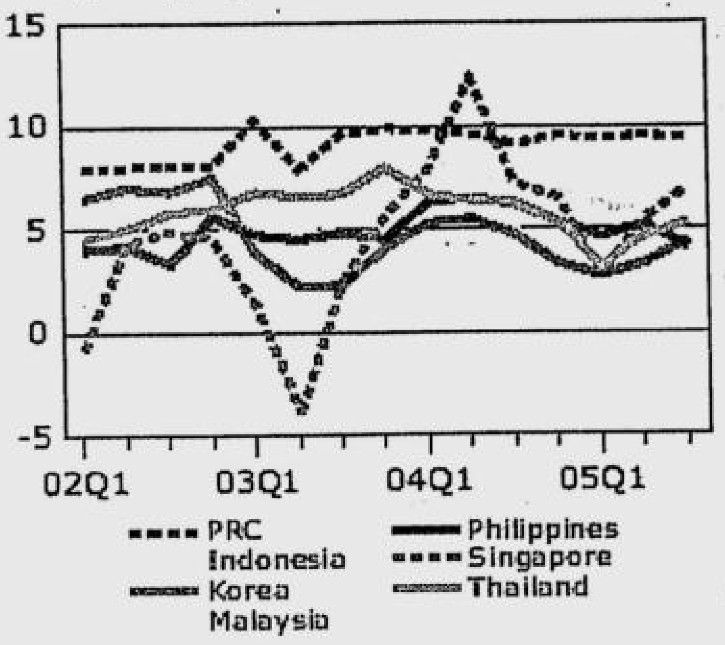
The ADB said its economic outlook for the region was subject to four major risks: Disorderly adjustment of the growing global payments imbalance, a sharp upturn in the global interest rate cycle, further increases in international oil prices, and a possible avian flu pandemic.

"Emerging East Asia should also continue to pursue structural and other policies that support private domestic demand. Coupled with appropriate exchange rate adjustments, this should help the region rebalance the sources of growth away from exports toward domestic demand and thus build resilience to external shocks," the report said.

Although the Philippines was seen to sustain its pace of growth for 2006, it was expected to post the slowest expansion among the four biggest economies of Southeast Asia. Indonesia was seen to grow by 5.9 percent next year, Malaysia by 5.3 percent and Thai-

ADB/ B2

Figure 4: **Real GDP Growth**
(y-o-y, %).



Source: ARIC Indicators.

INDICATORS

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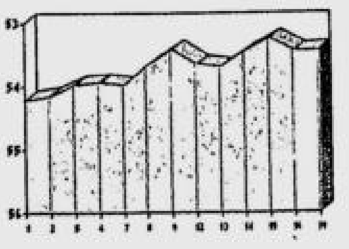


DECEMBER

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱ 53.44 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 19, 2005

¥ 116.43 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 19, 2005

GOLD: $506.00-506.50
per ounce Hong Kong, Dec. 19, 2005

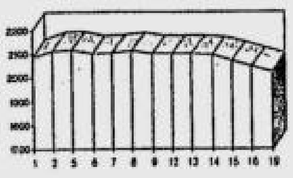
STOCK MARKET

Stocks down 1.2%

SHARE PRICES closed down 1.2 percent yesterday for the third-straight session, led by heavy selling in market heavyweight Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) and related stocks, dealers said.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index fell 22.86 points to 2,024.70. It traded between 2,018.19 and 2,047.56.

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX
DECEMBER



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Volume turnover reached 335.69 million shares worth P1.2 billion. Losers outnumbered gainers 57 to 14, while 48 stocks were unchanged. *AFP*

French Baker sets expansion

LEADING BAKERY-CAFÉ FRENCH Baker Inc. of businessman Johnlu Koa is spending as much as P20 million next year to expand its chain of cafés nationwide.

Koa said in an interview that his company would open its biggest bakery-café with an area of 300 square meters at the SM Mall of Asia.

The 381,000-sq.m. SM

FRENCH/ B3

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Altis 1.8 E A/T	878,000	100,000	66,560	45,836	36,536	26,072	21,038	18,160
Altis 1.6 E A/T	800,000	100,000	59,530	41,000	32,688	23,326	18,822	16,244
Altis 1.6 E M/T	765,000	100,000	56,388	38,831	30,962	22,094	17,828	15,385
Altis 1.6 J M/T	708,000	100,000	51 257	35 297	28 150	20 088	16 209	13 985

MODEL	SRP	DOWNPAYMENT	12	18	24	36	48	60
Innova 2.5 G A/T	1,045,000	100,000	82,030	56,495	45,014	32,122	25,919	22,384
Innova 2.5 G M/T	980,000	100,000	76,188	52,466	41,807	29,834	24,073	20,787
Innova 2.0 G A/T	985,000	100,000	76,638	52,776	42,054	30,010	24,215	20,910
Innova 2.0 G M/T	930,000	100,000	71,687	49,366	39,341	28,074	22,053	19,559
Innova 2.5 E M/T	885,000	100,000	67,636	46,576	37,121	26,489	21,374	18,454
Innova 2.5 J M/T	798,000	100,000	59,804	41,183	32,829	23,427	18,903	16,317
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(As of December 19, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	32	32.5	31.5	31.5	496,600
Bank of the Phil. Islands	53.5	54	53	53.5	902,900
China Banking Corp.	600	600	600	600	2,800
Citystate Savings Bank	17.75	17.75	17.75	17.75	300
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	100,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	55	55	53	53	34,000
International Exch. Bank	21.25	21.25	21.25	21.25	2,500
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	32.5	33	32	32.5	327,800
Philippine National Bank	32	32	31.5	31.5	35,100
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	13.5	13.75	13.5	13.75	21,000
Security Bank Corp.	32	32	31.5	32	14,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	31	31	31	31	14,400
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	0.77	0.77	0.77	0.77	50,000
First Abacus Financial	0.49	0.5	0.49	0.5	60,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	3140	3140	3140	3140	210
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	140	140	140	140	4,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2080	2085	2080	2080	220
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	13	13	12.5	13	188,700
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.89	0.91	0.89	0.91	880,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	715	715	700	700	102,960
Ipeople Inc.	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	10,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.047	0.048	0.047	0.048	1,400,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.35	3.35	3.25	3.35	1,010,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1745	1750	1730	1745	88,090
Ivantage Corp.	0.57	0.58	0.57	0.58	880,000
Philweb Corp.	0.016	0.016	0.015	0.016	76,800,000
POWER, ENERGY & OTHER UTILITIES					
Manila Electric Co. A	14.25	14.25	14	14.25	60,500
Manila Electric Co. B	22.25	22.25	21.25	21.5	1,632,700
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.2	6.2	6.1	6.1	1,797,000
Petron Corp.	4.3	4.3	4.15	4.15	3,881,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.74	1.74	1.72	1.72	150,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	9.3	9.4	9.2	9.3	239,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.71	190,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	200,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.3	4.3	4.2	4.2	3,620,000
Republic Cement Corp.	0.77	0.77	0.77	0.77	80,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.68	1.68	1.68	1.68	2,985,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.45	3.45	3.45	3.45	10,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	22.25	22.25	22	22	9,600
Jollibee Foods Corp.	41	41.5	40.5	41	365,100
Pancake House Inc.	3.6	3.65	3.5	3.65	106,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	10,000
San Miguel Corp. A	64	64.5	63.5	64.5	281,500
San Miguel Corp. B	83.5	83.5	81	82.5	211,100
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	200,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	5,000,000
Ayala Corp.	310	310	300	300	305,440
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.75	4.8	4.75	4.8	318,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.022	1,000,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.08	2.08	2.08	2.08	10,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	12,000,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	0.71	0.71	0.7	0.7	110,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9.4	9.4	9.3	9.3	12,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.12	1.12	1.06	1.08	24,551,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95	90,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.175	130,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.31	0.31	0.3	0.3	2,140,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.05	3.1	3	3.1	361,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.029	0.029	0.025	0.025	2,000,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.18	1.18	1.18	1.18	125,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	47.5	47.5	45	46.5	1,673,500
Global Equities Inc.	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.065	500,000
Ionics Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	110,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.25	825,000
Macroasia Corp.	1.46	1.46	1.46	1.46	12,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.016	0.016	0.016	0.016	1,000,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.22	1.24	1.22	1.22	1,504,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	200,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.33	0.34	0.33	0.34	3,380,000
Paxys Inc.	5.7	5.8	5.7	5.8	35,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	100,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	1.28	1.28	1.28	1.28	10,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.49	0.49	0.49	0.49	20,000
SM Investments Corp.	240	243	240	243	40,610
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	15,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.065	400,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	510,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	200,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.18	1.18	1.18	1.18	22,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.76	0.76	0.76	0.76	10,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.98	0.98	0.96	0.96	980,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.66	0.67	0.65	0.67	150,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.42	1.42	1.42	1.42	493,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (PDR)	12.5	12.75	12.5	12.5	304,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.- Pref.	1110	1115	1110	1115	49,950
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,900
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,600
PLDT 10% Pref Series AA	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,300
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	8.8	9.1	8.8	9.1	94,000
Far Eastern University	600	600	600	600	190
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	9.5	9.6	9.5	9.5	3,500,000
C & P Homes Inc.	2.02	2.02	1.86	1.88	869,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	280,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.42	0.42	0.41	0.41	3,110,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.32	1.32	1.3	1.32	1,128,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.195	0.195	0.195	0.195	900,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	220,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.0975	0.0975	0.0975	0.0975	100,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.14	0.14	0.135	0.135	530,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.7	185,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.12	0.12	0.11	0.115	1,650,000
SM Development Corp.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	5,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.7	7.7	7.6	7.6	6,983,000
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	1,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	5.7	5.7	5.5	5.5	291,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.22	0.22	0.215	0.215	5,560,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.25	0.25	0.24	0.24	9,510,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	47,900,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.029	13,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.3	1.3	1.26	1.26	1,561,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.6	1.6	1.58	1.6	2,719,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	27	27	27	27	35,600
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	50,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	2,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	20,000
Pacifica	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	10,000,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	43,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.135	900,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	250,000

CURRENCIES

December 19, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.832432	1.000000	53.3340
Japan	Yen	0.007198	0.008647	0.4612
United Kingdom	Pound	1.475318	1.772300	94.5238
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.107383	0.128999	6.8800
Switzerland	Franc	0.645296	0.775194	41.3442
Canada	Dollar	0.717985	0.862515	46.0014
Singapore	Dollar	0.499839	0.600456	32.0247
Australia	Dollar	0.618678	0.743218	39.6388
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.208627	2.653224	141.5070
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.221976	0.266660	14.2220
Brunei	Dollar	0.498343	0.598659	31.9289
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000084	0.000101	0.0054
Thailand	Baht	0.020343	0.024438	1.3034
UAE	Dirham	0.226648	0.272272	14.5214
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.201300	64.0701
Argentina	Peso	0.273826	0.328947	17.5441
Brazil	Real	0.357113	0.429000	22.8803
Denmark	Kroner	0.134181	0.161192	8.5970
India	Rupee	0.018421	0.022129	1.1802
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.220336	0.264690	14.1170
Mexico	New Peso	0.077548	0.093158	4.9685
New Zealand	Dollar	0.573813	0.689322	36.7643
Norway	Kroner	0.125233	0.150442	8.0237
Pakistan	Rupee	0.013908	0.016708	0.8911
South Africa	Rand	0.130159	0.156360	8.3393
Korea	Won	0.000819	0.000984	0.0525
Sweden	Kroner	0.105617	0.126878	6.7669
Syria	Pound	0.016036	0.019264	1.0274
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025138	0.030198	1.6106
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000388	0.000466	0.0249

ADB expects 4.8% growth for RP in '06

From page B1

land by 5 percent.

Nevertheless, the report said in its individual country outlook for the Philippines that "against the background of a challenging year, the economy again demonstrated resilience."

It noted that Philippine economic growth in the first half of 2005 slowed to 4.7 percent from 6 percent in 2004, and was estimated to remain at 4.7 percent for the full year.

The report said higher fuel prices, slowing exports due to the weakness in the global IT (information technology) market, and the El Niño-induced drought had contributed to the slowdown. It added that private consumption had continued to grow, albeit more slowly, supported by overseas worker remittances, but fixed investment declined.

"Although a pickup in the IT sector should support growth, the forecast for 2006 is for GDP growth of 4.8 percent, partly reflecting lackluster investment arising from policy uncertainties," the report said.

"Significant challenges remain, including inflation, which remains high, and the implementation of fiscal and financial sector reform. Ensuring medium-term fiscal sustainability continues to be the main policy challenge," the report said.

The ADB forecast for 2006 was in sharp contrast to the bullish projections of the the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda), which said GDP growth for 2006 would be between 5.7 and 6.3 percent. Although lower than the government's original target of 6.3-7.3 percent, it reflected a significant rebound from the expected economic growth for 2005 of between 4.8 percent and 5.1 percent.

The official GDP growth target for 2005 was 5.3-6.3 percent, but unexpected shocks such as high oil prices and sluggish agricultural output, as well as lower demand for the country's exports dampened economic performance.

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From left to right: Uriel Balboa (MBLIC President) and George Tiu (PLGIC President & COO)

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ROADSHOW SCHEDULES:

December 14
Makati City - DBP Social Hall, 10:00 am

December 15
Cagayan de Oro - Grand City Hotel, 2:00 pm
Iloilo - Sarabia Hotel, 2:00 pm
San Fernando, Pampanga - Red Rickshaw Restaurant, 2:00 pm

December 16
Cebu - Waterfront Hotel, 2:00 pm
Baguio City - Hotel Elizabeth, 2:00 pm

December 19
Davao City - Marco Polo Hotel, 10:30 am

Much ado Abat nothing

MR. BEARBULL

Ron Nathan

I WAS QUITE SURPRISED AT THE MARKET'S reaction-- down 73 points in three days-- initially due to an 80-year old retired general proclaiming himself president. Two weeks ago, I declared myself pope, but nobody took the slightest notice and it never got into the media. To be fair, the government was concerned that there were other military involved and they were correct. Intelligence reports show that his conspirators were Marshall Law, General Amnesty, Colonel Sanders, Major Domo, Captain Marvel, Sergeant Bilko, Corporal Punishment, and Private Benjamin. They even sent him a book, "The Road to Sedition," but he never got to read it. The envelope was marked private, and as he was a general, he did not open it.

King Kong is such a hit at the box office that Viva Films is working on a Filipino version Kang Kong. Globe has gone heavily into 3G but I already have a G3 razor, which removes a broad band of whiskers most effectively. If Globe needs financing, it can ask Gillette to razor loan.

Every child in the class had to write a Christmas poem. My daughter wrote:

I have a cat named Santa, he comes in through the doors.

Whenever he gets angry, he shows his Santa claws.

There will be no article next week because we will be on vacation. We were planning to go to Iceland to see Miss World. I am not worried about the polar bears but some are bipolar, so we will probably stay in Asia. I will write on Jan. 4, which is a Wednesday.

***

For the past month, the market has been moving sideways and the risk factor remained in the upper half of the neutral range so there were no signals. The 73-point fall has brought the indicator down to a single digit so that there will be lots of BUY signals as soon as the foreign selling stops.

In the past three days, P500 million was sold, mostly by one brokerage house, which has consistently been bullish of the Philippines. All the price targets of the leaders are well above the current market price. It may be that some of their clients are switching to Japan, now emerging from a very long recession. I don't believe that the minor disturbance caused them to change their view on the Philippines but we have to watch the collective and individual buying and selling, shown in detail in the newsletter every day.

There are a number of blue chips standing at zero risk and I am watching them carefully. On the slightest sign of strength, they will be the ones to lead the annual window dressing, which has taken place nine times in the past 10 years. It is akin to the strength of the peso, resulting from increased remittances at Christmas and in time to pay school fees. It is a seasonal factor and the share rally usually continues into the second week of January, whereas the peso becomes weaker.

Our research department has published its outlook for 2006, and it is very bullish, based on the improving fiscal situation, plus continued growth in 8 selected stocks, 7 of which I have recommended in the INQUIRER during the past two years. It is interesting that while they are purely fundamental analysts and I am predominantly a technical analyst, we always seem to agree an the stocks and quite often on the timing.

We are awaiting the prospectus for First Gen, due in January. This IPO is certain to attract a lot of interest because while oil prices are well below their peak, natural gas is at a record high in the US. I should be able to form some opinion after I have studied the prospectus next month. FPH owns 88 percent of First Gen and is assured of a large one-time gain. I hope the book-builders do not get greedy and overprice the stock, otherwise, it might suffer the same fate as SM.

Among the various projects I undertook in London was how new issues fared in the two years following the IPO. I discovered that almost without exception, those issues that opened at a premium performed considerably better than the index; those that opened flat or at a discount under-performed the index. There is a lesson to be learned here. Leave something on the table for investors.

Fitch Ratings has just completed a study of the US, Emerging Asia and Emerging Europe. They predict that growth in the US next year will slow to less than 3 percent from the 3rd quarter figure of 4.3 percent. Asian export growth will respond to weaker external demand, particularly in the second half of 2006 and into 2007. Our exports are already weak and sales to China and Japan fell in October. The US, our main market, was up 22 percent. If this turns down, we will face a large trade deficit in the next two years.

In Asia, upgrades have outnumbered downgrades in three of the last four years, and the cycle might be winding down with China expected to grow at just below 9 percent. Fitch adds that most sovereign ratings are positive in Emerging Europe, as has been the case for the past several years, and the average rating could rise above that of Emerging Asia next year.

They do not anticipate any shocks in Asia and expect exchange rates to remain fairly steady. Interest rates, however, will tend to follow the US so if Bernanke, who replaces Greenspan in January, continues to hike rates, other countries will have to follow. Our central bank has already raised rates three times and has warned that further hikes cannot be ruled out. Europe and Thailand have increased their prime rates and Indonesia has increased its rates 6 times in the past four months.

I am, therefore, bullish about 2006, but not excessively so. Selectivity will be the key so investors will have to position themselves in the right stocks. It will not be a market in which you can just buy anything and make money.

I wish my readers a happy and prosperous New Year, both of them. *mrbearbull@hotmail.com*

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TeleTech Customer Care Management (Phils.), Inc.
Winsource Solutions (Phils.) Inc.
and many others
Robinsons Land Corporation has the widest selection of sites for Call Centers and Business Process Outsourcing in the Philippines, housing most of the world's largest and most admired outsourcing companies today. With 2 dozen commercial and office buildings plus more opening in 2006, Robinsons Land has become the landlord of choice - helping companies in acquiring their ideal location for business, fully spreading their business risk and enhancing disaster recovery capabilities.
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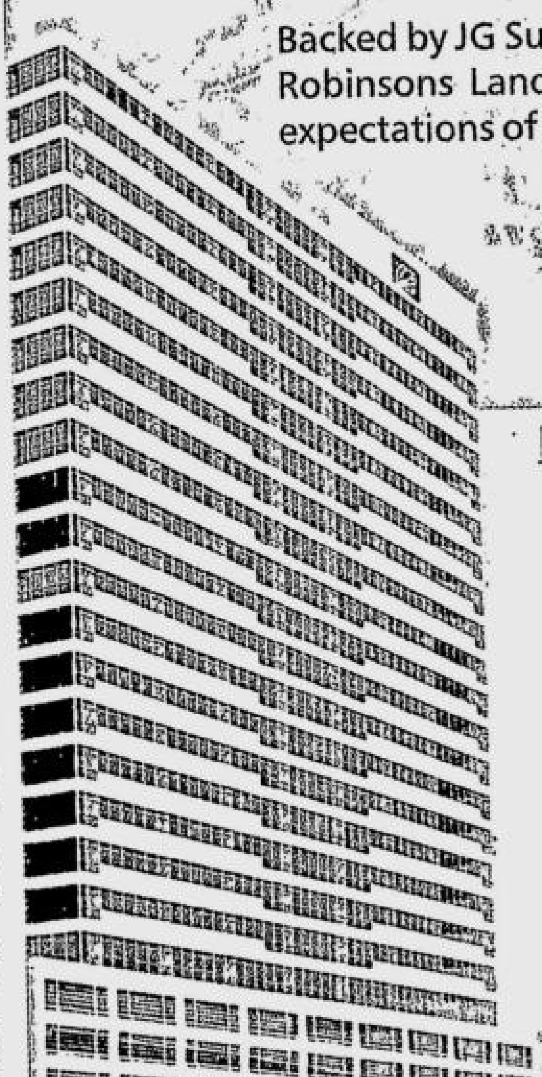

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French Baker . . .

From page B1

Mall of Asia is touted as one of the largest in Asia and will be located along the Bay Area in Pasay City. It will open by February next year.

Aside from Mall of Asia, French Baker is also considering opening in other SM malls such as in Lipa, Batangas and Clark, Pampanga.

To date, French Baker has 30 bakery-cafés nationwide. Koa's family owns 100 percent of the French Baker brand.

As proof of its resilience for the past 16 years, French Baker was awarded as one of the country's leading brands by Superbrands Philippines in 2004.

French Baker opened its first baked breads branch in 1989 at SM North Edsa with an initial capital of P2 million.

Koa also said that French Baker was not for sale despite offers from various investors. He said his family would still like to keep control of French Baker. *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

SM CITY Baguio - SHOPPING CENTER OF THE YEAR

1st PRA President's Award
Mr. HENRY SY, SR., SM Group of Companies
"Father of Philippine Retailing"

BENCH - GLOBAL RETAILER OF THE YEAR

DEPARTMENT OF TRADE & INDUSTRY PHILIPPINES

Department of Trade and Industry and The Philippine Retailers Association

PHILIPPINE RETAILERS ASSOCIATION

SHOPWISE - DEPARTMENT STORE/HYPERMART

MERCURY DRUG - ***HALL OF FAME***
CATEGORY KILLER - CONSUMABLE

Salute the 2005 Outstanding Filipino Retailers

NATIONAL BOOK STORE - ***HALL OF FAME***
CATEGORY KILLER - DURABLE

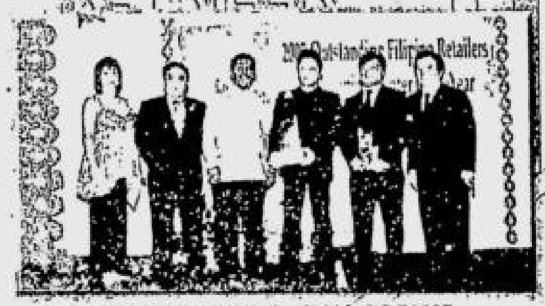
ABENSON - CATEGORY KILLER - BIG TICKET

CELINE - FASHION CATEGORY, MEDIUM - SHOES & BAGS

BAYO - ***HALL OF FAME***
FASHION CATEGORY - MEDIUM - APPAREL

"Recognizing the country's retailers who have epitomized the model of success, growth and good ethical practices"

RUSTY LOPEZ - FASHION CATEGORY
SMALL - SHOES & BAGS



FOLDED & HUNG - ***HALL OF FAME***
FASHION CATEGORY - SMALL - APPAREL

VIDEO CITY - ***HALL OF FAME***
SERVICES

BENCH FIX - MOST PROMISING RETAILER

HBC - SPECIALTY CATEGORY

BHF PRIME GROUP CORP. - SPECIAL AWARD
REGIONAL RETAILER

NEPO MALL - SPECIAL AWARD
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For details on the 2006 Search for Outstanding Filipino Retailers, please contact: PHILIPPINE RETAILERS ASSOCIATION
Unit 2610, Jollibee Plaza, Emerald Ave., Ortigas Center, Pasig City • Tel. No.: 687-4180/4181/4985 • Fax No.; 636-0825 • E-mail: pra@nwave.net

GlobeSolutions hosts 2nd CEO Golf Classic

GLOBE president and CEO Gerry Ablaza presents the overall prize to former Finance Secretary and current AIM president Roberto De Ocampo at the Globe 2nd CEO Golf Cup awards night. At right is host Aliya Parcs.

OVER 100 TOP EXECUTIVES OF PREmier Philippine corporations met recently for an energetic round of golf at the Globe 2nd CEO Golf Classic. Hosted by GlobeSolutions, the country's leading provider of mobile business communication services, the two-day tournament was held at the Sta. Elena Golf and Country Club in Cabuyao, Laguna.

The players included prominent members of the business community, such as AIM president Dr. Roberto de Ocampo, Golden Arches Development Corp president George T. Yang, Avon Products Manufacturing Inc general manager Ariel Ong, Golden Arches Development Corp managing director Kenneth S. Yang, Security Bank Corp president Alberto Villarosa, Philippine Airlines president Jaime Bautista, Bountry Agro Ventures Inc EVP/CFO George S. Chua, to name a few. Globe enterprise business group head Gil Genio and GlobeSolutions corporate business group head Dan David were also present at the ceremonial tee-off.

Winners were awarded during a ceremony at the Mandarin Oriental, hosted by Aliya Parcs and featuring performances by Rachel Alejandro and Sabor Latino. Globe Telecom CEO Gerry Ablaza graced the awards night along with other Globe officials. Dr. Roberto de Ocampo proved his sports prowess by bagging the over-all champion, while Coral Bay Nickel Corp president Fujimura Takanori emerged as the runner-up.

Several lucky guests won prizes during the raffle draw, including putters, drivers, a golf cart and golf trips for two to Shenzen, China; Phuket, Thailand and Bali, Indonesia. Globe also conducted its first live public demonstration of 3G (third generation) mobile technology, the latest cutting-edge innovation that it recently introduced into the Philippine market, at this elite gathering.

Gil Genio, head of Globe's enterprise business group, hailed the event's success as an opportunity to strengthen business relationships among Globe and its clients. "We currently have strong partnerships with major companies in various industries, and Globe is pleased to host events like these as part of the special privileges that we offer to our valued clients. Aside from expressing our company's appreciation for their continued patronage, they provide opportunities to reaffirm our ties," he stated.

The head of GlobeSolutions' corporate business group, Dan David, adds: "The Globe 2nd CEO Golf Classic tournament brought together representatives from different companies that are all harnessing the power of mobile communication to attain their business goals. In line with Globe's vision of empowering people through relevant innovations, GlobeSolutions is committed to helping its client companies achieve success by providing reliable and efficient communication services."

GlobeSolutions offers a wide variety of business communication solutions suited to diverse corporate needs. For inquiries, call the GlobeSolutions hotline at 730-1999 or e-mail globesolutions@globetel.com.ph.

ALISI'S WELCOME DINNER, TOUR FOR NEW YORK CONSUL GENERAL

Ayala Land International Sales Inc recently hosted a welcome dinner and museum tour for the Consulate General of the Philippines in New York during a visit to Manila last month. New York Consul General Cecille Rebong and the rest of her group were treated to an exclusive tour of Ayala Museum. The tour aimed to create further awareness of the richness of Filipino culture and artistry, as well as to introduce investment-worthy developments that Filipinos abroad, or expats, may be looking for in the region. Ayala Land International is a wholly owned subsidiary of Ayala Land Inc. The leading Filipino real estate developer has an expansive catalogue of impeccably designed living spaces and communities that embody ideal homes and neighborhoods. For details on Ayala Land properties, call the toll-free number 1-877-atAyala (2829252) for US residents, or 8000-atAyala (2829252) for toll-free numbers outside the US, visit the website at www.atAyala.com. Shown are the attendees of the recent Ayala Museum tour (from left) deputy general manager of Alisi Zanny Espinosa, general manager of Alisi Dave Rafael, DOT New York Director Emma Yulo, New York Consul General Cecille Rebong, ALI vice president Rene Almendras, and Alisi CFO John Estacio.

SAN MIGUEL EMPLOYEES VISIT ORPHANS, ELDERLY

San Miguel Corp spreads laughter and cheer to orphans and elderly this holiday season with its Christmas campaign 'Hand-in-Hand this Christmas'. Now on its second year, San Miguel has joined hands with major partner McDonalds in visiting 50 elderly homes, orphanages, community-based homes for street children and war veteran hospitals in Metro Manila. Photo shows San Miguel employees with the children of Caritas Manila.

Supply Chain Consulting-Australia acquires Magnus Asia Operations

SUPPLY CHAIN CONSULTING AUSTRALIA and Magnus Philippines, two big names in software sales, implementation, support and application development, have been bought under one entity with the acquisition by Supply Chain Consulting of Magnus Asia in what is considered to be one of the year's biggest event in the software services industry. Now as Supply Chain Consulting Philippines Inc, they are confident that they will set a new benchmark in the packaged software sales, implementation [SAP and Oracle], support and application development arena.

Supply Chain, an Australian owned SAP Professional Services organization, provides specialized supply chain business consultancy and implementation services. It is the leading SAP implementation partner in Australia that boasts an on-time, on budget and quality delivery reputation. Supply Chain has received numerous awards and has been recognized for its achievements in its existing markets. Tony Carr, CEO of Supply Chain Consulting is happy to inform everyone that Supply Chain is a premiere SAP implementation partner, and has just recently been given an award as the Top Services Partner of SAP.

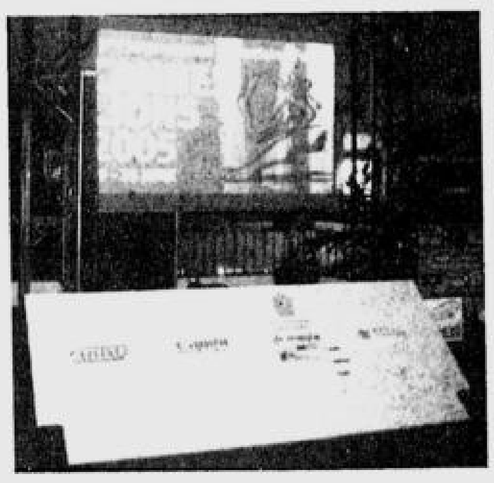
Magnus Philippines has been recognized as a premier implementation partner by both SAP and Oracle, software companies that originated from Germany and USA, respectively. Magnus Philippines has also been certified in two consecutive exercises as a first-level SAP support center. Magnus Philippines is just one of the auspices of Magnus Asia. Its Asian affiliates in Vietnam, Malaysia, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand have also been providing the best support in business solutions in their respective regions.

Dec. 1, 2005 - these two global giants spread their wings even wider to dominate the Philippine market as Supply Chain Consulting Philippines Inc. It will not only address all corporate business' solutions requirements, it will also revolutionize the industry through customized products that are tailor-fit to each client's unique need. The Supply Chain Asia general manager, Jan Biezepol, heads a strong team of 100+ consultants focusing on SAP and Oracle implementation, support and application development. This fact alone sets a new standard in the country's corporate arena.

Supply Chain Consulting Australia chief finance officer Michael Ricci, who has relocated to The Philippines to help co-ordinate the acquisition and growth of Supply Chain's Asian operations, believes that the expansion of Supply Chain will definitely give a whole new dimension to SAP and Oracle consulting in the region.

ProductFILES

Airmedia's HoloDisplays debut at Ad Congress



MAKING THEIR GRAND DEBUT IN THE PHILIPpines, Airmedia's HoloDisplay "living billboards" were used to exhibit the winning commercials of the 2005 Cannes Lions International Advertising Festival at the 19th Philippine Advertising Congress held in Cebu City. The latest innovation in digital video display, Airmedia's HoloDisplays are acrylic projection screens capable of absorbing projected light and diffusing it evenly, even amplifying it. This allows the technology to deliver high-quality digital videos in a form as lightweight and slim as a tarpaulin, and nearly four times larger than the biggest plasma television. The technology is the latest offering from Pacific Airmedia, the non-traditional media provider that pioneered airship and inflatable advertising in the country early in 2005. Screens had been installed at Ninoy Aquino International Airport (in support of the 23rd Southeast Asian Games) and Robinson's Supermarket Metro East, while installations at Robinson's Galleria, and Gateway Mall in Araneta Center are also scheduled. For more information about Airmedia's HoloDisplays, call 716-9604 to 05 or visit www.airmedia.com.ph.

Dinner Roll from Gardenia

GARDENIA BAKERIES PHILIPPINES INC, THE COUNTRY'S leading bread manufacturer, brings to your table the "crème de la crème" of dinner rolls. With Gardenia Dinner Rolls, the common dinner roll is now made more special. Experience the softness and creamy goodness of Gardenia Dinner Roll that goes best with your favorite fried chicken, soups, or just simply eat it on its own. Its melt-in-your mouth softness and rich creamy taste make dinners, parties, and even breakfasts and snacks sumptuously satisfying. Gardenia Dinner Roll is now available at your favorite supermarkets.

Kusuka now in the Philippines

KUSUKA CASSAVA CHIPS, IS NOW CONQUERING THE PHILIPPINES. KUSUka cassava chips is the no-cholesterol, crisp and filling snack for all ages and for all occasions. You can choose from among 11 exotic, favorite and exciting flavors: Cheese Burger, Sweet and Sour, Chicken Black Pepper, American Cheese, Spicy Satay, Grilled Cheese, Salty, Original, Barbecue, Italian Pizza and Smoked Beef. Kusuka is available at Pioneer Supermarket in Mandaluyong City, Daily Supermarket in P. Tuazon Cubao, Wilson-Greenhills stores, Top Value in Banaue Quezon City, and in all stores and supermarkets near you.

The Fairy Tale Buffet at The Seafood Club

THE SEAFOOD CLUB LOCATED AT LEVEL II OF Greenbelt 3 presents The Fairy Tale Buffet. It is priced at P399+ for daily (lunch and dinner) and P575+ for the grand dinner buffet every Friday and Saturday nights. Enjoy dishes from the salad bar up to the main course consisting of beef, fish, chicken, pork, pasta and sumptuous crabs and seafood, plus the all time favorite chocolate fountain and crepes for dessert. For inquiries call 757-4129.

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DREAMING OF THAT WONDERFUL VACAtion? Wanna have a new car or go on a shopping spree? Eureka! Discover the way to make these dreams your reality with Earth+Style Eureka, the Earth+Style Referral Partners Program. By simply referring your personal network of family and friends to purchase any of Earth+Style's projects, you can start earning your way up to millions. No need to sell, just refer. No capital involved either, so there is absolutely no risk for you. Earth+Style is committed to enhancing the quality of life of our customers through exciting property-based lifestyle products and services. Earth+Style has projects in the booming community of Biñan, Laguna and the robust towns of Cavite, catering to the various lifestyle needs of the Filipino family. This referral program provides an unlimited income opportunity. With a wide range of products to choose from, you get at least 4 times more chances to refer a potential buyer. What's more, you also give your referrals the opportunity to have, not just a better home, but more so, a better life. With Earth+Style Eureka, you don't need to give up whatever it is you are presently doing. You can very well do this in your free time. In fact, your business associates can even be your goldmine of referrals that will lead you to a financially rewarding business. Earn as much as P240,000 in a month. Find out how by calling 638-8558, 687-3524, 687-3260, 687-5821.

Makro: Bringing wholesale shopping to the next level

MAKRO's 14TH STORE IS A TWO level structure rising at Osmeña Highway corner Finlandia Street in Barangay San Isidro, Makati City. The store with a 20,000sqm constructed area and 10,000sqm foot area only took 130 days to complete. Very soon as with all Makro stores, it will be known for its guaranteed lowest wholesale prices for its more than 28,000 items. That's why ever growing number of members are already aware of the many choices they have in Makro.

Aside from the lowest prices, shoppers enjoy the highest quality standards especially for the fresh products, hygenic temperature controlled and state-of-the-art storage and display facilities. Sari-sari store items are also sold in smaller packs to suit the retailers budget. It's all about easy and convenient wholesale buying under one roof. Makati residents can now enjoy the same benefits with the free and easy membership that is available since May 10, 2005.

Makro is a company that started in 1996 that caters to the various needs for professional customers. It is a high volume, low price, low cost, no frills cash and carry wholesaler that provides the best buying conditions and products suited to the needs of its professional customers like hotels, restaurants, caterers and small retailers or sari-sari stores and services-end-users.

It's all about offering the widest selection at the lowest wholesale prices. Because of the combined negotiating influences and buying power of Makro, discounts requested from suppliers and manufacturers are passed directly to the valued Makro members. Members enjoy so many shopping privileges at this one stop shop destination. And among the privileges are the Makro Mail that is a shopping guide that features special deals and products tagged as "Everyday Low Prices".

Aside from this, exclusive Makro brands such as Aro, SavePak and Q-Biz offer competitive quality and are better priced than leading market brands. And all of these are available only in Makro.

To date, there are 13 other stores strategically located in key areas in the country. They are: Cainta, Imus Cavite, Novaliches, Sucat, North Harbour, Cebu, Davao, Pampanga, Batangas, Cagayan de Oro, Iloilo, Cubao and Las Piñas.

Australian migration opportunities for OFW's

THE MANAGING DIRECTOR OF EasyMigrate Corp, John Craigie, stated that Australian employers are still in great need of skilled workers. He indicated that Filipinos who have added previous overseas experience to their original home employment have an excellent chance of securing visas to work or reside in Australia. He pointed out that OFW's have not only gained valuable further experience at the foreign place of employment, but many have often been given the opportunity for additional skills and supervisory training by foreign employers.

As OFW workers have already seized the initiative to work in often arduous locations thus already gaining a financial "nestegg", this is now their chance to convert their foreign earnings to further advance themselves and the future of their families by applying for visas to Australia.

Craigie also noted that Australia's Department of Immigration has also recently made more legislation changes to the General Skilled Migration regulations which have extended the category of relatives able to sponsor relatives.

For some visas, applicants may now be sponsored by Australian residents who are cousins, and nephews and nieces may also sponsor their aunts and uncles wishing to apply. Consequently, OFW's who also have relatives in Australia now have even greater prospects for successful application.

MODL (Migration Occupations in Demand) have also been expanded recently so that, in addition to the ongoing need for skilled crafts persons, civil, chemical, mining and petroleum engineers are now on the "demand" list.

Generally speaking, prime criteria for success is to be aged under 45 years, have at least vocational English, qualifications assessed as being suitable for the nominated occupation and 3-4 years recent experience in that occupation.

As a festive promotion EasyMigrate is currently offering free assessments. Interested parties are invited to secure further information by either calling Marikit Figueras on 844-4463/889-8141 or e-mailing updated CV's to john.craigie@easymigrate.com.

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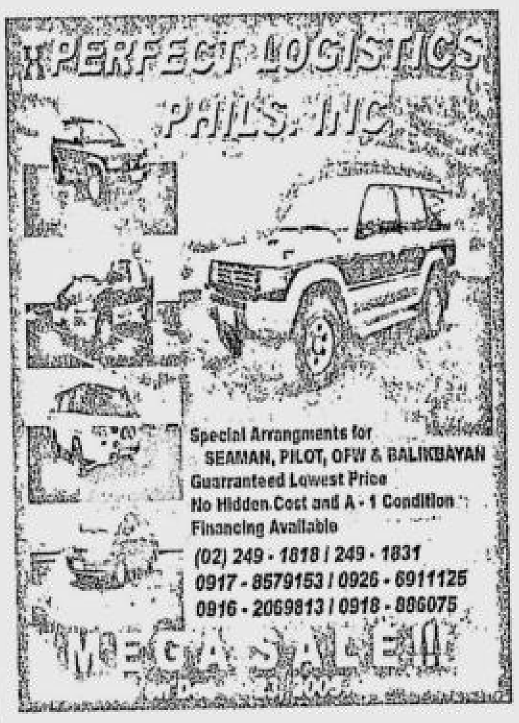

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PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late CIRILO C. DELOS REYES, SR. and CONCHITA FLORES has been extrajudicially settled by his heirs before Notary Public Myrna Donado Santiago of Cavite as per Doc#380 Page#76 Book#LIV Series of 2005
(PDI-Dec.20,27&Jan.3,2005)

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

RETIRE 2YRS 09189051567

RTW CONSIGN 0917-8830002

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MALE

Operation Mgr 0920-9209413

MALE/FEMALE

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URGENT! CALL CENTER AGENTS Fluent in English Fax resume @ 879-8272

PERSONAL

NOVENA TO THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS AND SAINT JUDE

May the most Sacred Heart of Jesus be praised, blessed, loved, adored and glorified throughout the whole world now and forever. Amen.

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. Pray for us.

St. Jude, worker of miracles, helper for the helpless, pray for us

Say nine times a day for nine days. Prayer will be answered by the eighth day, it has never failed. Thank you very much, Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and St. Jude, for favor granted

POEA 24-HR
HOTLINES
722-1144
722-1155

PHILIPPINE DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION

2228 Chino Roces Avenue, Makati City
www.pdic.gov.ph

INVITATION TO BID

Sealed bids will be accepted on **12 January 2006, Thursday** (not later than 2:00 p.m.) at the 6th Floor, PDIC Building, 2228 Chino Roces Avenue, Makati City for the sale on **"AS-IS WHERE-IS" basis** of the following corporate assets of PDIC. Prospective buyers are enjoined to inspect the following listed properties before entering their bids:

Code Name	Property Description	Title No.	Min. Bid Price (PhP)
P1-B16-L26-001	247 sqm res lot with 4 bedroom cottage Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-102324^	P3,890,925.00
P1-B20-L11-002	367 sqm res lot with 3 bedroom cottage Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas ^	T-102784^	P5,672,500.00
P1-B3-L4-003	1000 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101912	P8,100,000.00
P1-B3-L8-004	1011 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-102233	P8,189,100.00
P1-B12-L56-005	328 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-102235	P2,656,800.00
P1-B12-L57-006	328 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101909	P2,656,800.00
P1-B58-L22-007	550 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-102325	P4,455,000.00
P1-B58-L23-008	457 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101910	P3,701,700.00
P1-B67-L30216-009	395 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101908	P3,199,500.00
P2-B38-L1-010	2376 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101911	P19,245,600.00
P2-B39-L9-011	1135 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-102326	P9,193,500.00
P2-B49-L9-012	403 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-104362	P3,264,300.00
P2-B49-L16-013	301 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-104364	P2,438,100.00
P2-B49-L21-014	604 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-104363	P4,892,400.00
P2-B51-L24-015	376 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-102234	P3,045,600.00
GTOWN-B4-L18-016	671 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101993	P5,133,150.00
GTOWN-B4-L19-017	658 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101991	P5,033,700.00
GTOWN-B4-L20-018	646 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101995	P4,941,900.00
GTOWN-B4-L21-019	651 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101998	P4,980,150.00
GTOWN-B4-L22-020	628 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101998-A	P4,804,200.00
GTOWN-B4-L23-021	660 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101989	P5,049,000.00
GTOWN-B4-L24-022	485 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101992	P3,710,250.00
GTOWN-B4-L25-023	412 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-102002	P3,151,800.00
GTOWN-B4-L26-024	309 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101994	P2,363,850.00
GTOWN-B4-L27-025	312 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101997	P2,386,800.00
GTOWN-B4-L28-026	314 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101987	P2,402,100.00
GTOWN-B4-L29-027	373 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-102000	P2,853,450.00
GTOWN-B4-L30-028	470 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101999	P3,595,500.00
GTOWN-B7-L7-029	584 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-102001	P4,467,600.00
GTOWN-B7-L8-030	707 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101990	P5,408,550.00
GTOWN-B7-L9-031	720 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101988	P5,508,000.00
GTOWN-B7-L10-032	694 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101996	P5,309,100.00
GOWN-B7-L11-033	690 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101922	P5,278,500.00
GTOWN-B7-L12-034	877 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101921	P6,709,050.00
GTOWN-B7-L13-035	613 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101920	P4,689,450.00
GTOWN-B7-L14-036	409 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101919	P3,128,850.00
GTOWN-B7-L15-037	456 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101918	P3,488,400.00
GTOWN-B7-L16-038	403 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101917	P3,082,950.00
GTOWN-B7-L17-039	384 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101916	P2,937,600.00
GTOWN-B7-L18-040	493 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101915	P3,771,450.00
GTOWN-B7-L19-041	525 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101914	P4,016,250.00
GTOWN-B7-L21-042	495 sqm vacant residential lot Canyon Woods Res. Resort, Brgy. San Gregorio, Laurel, Batangas	T-101913	P3,786,750.00
Munti-B9-L6-043	35 sqm 2-storey townhouse Brgy. Putatan, Muntinlupa City	T-12250*	P385,000.00
Par-B6-L11-044	350 sqm vacant residential lot Brgy. San Dionisio, Paranaque City	T-161055	P2,800,000.00
Lag-L138--045	1610 sqm vacant residential lot Brgy. Landayan, San Pedro, Laguna	T-530480**	P1,932,000.00
Lag-B45-L31-046	200 sqm vacant residential lot Brgy. Malitlit, Sta. Rosa, Laguna	T-535819	P800,000.00
Lag-L3-E-1-047	551 sqm residential lot Brgy. Mayondon, Los Banos, Laguna	T-532148@	P881,600.00
Lag-L3-E-3-048	551 sqm residential lot Brgy. Mayondon, Los Banos, Laguna	T-532149@	P881,600.00
Lag-L3-E-4-049	551 sqm resl lot with 1-storey house Brgy. Mayondon, Los Banos, Laguna	T-532150@	P968,800.00
Lag-L3-E-5-050	468 sqm residential lot Brgy. Mayondon, Los Banos, Laguna	T-532151@	P748,800.00
Lag-L3-E-6-051	634 sqm residential lot Brgy. Mayondon, los Banos, Laguna	T-532152@	P1,014,400.00
Lag-L3850-052	754 sqm & 667 sqm res lot with apts. Brgy. Anos, Los Banos, Laguna	T-536629 & T-532196♦	P9,236,500.00
Lag-L7784-053	703 sqm res lot with improvement Brgy. Anos, Los Banos, Laguna	T-D-002-4758	P1,124,800.00
Lag-L7785-054	1193 sqm res lot with improvement Brgy. Anos, Los Banos, Laguna	TD-002-4760	P1,908,800.00
Lag-L6497-055	928 sqm residential lot Brgy. Batong Malaki, Los Banos, Laguna	T-546138	P2,940,000.00
Lag-L6-056	686 sqm res lot with 2-storey house Brgy. Anos, Los Banos, Laurel	T-532161@	P5,792,000.00

* Townhouse
** with occupants
@ occupied by former owner
♦ Lot Basis; T-532169 is an interior lot
^ fully furnish

Each bid proposal shall be accompanied by a deposit equivalent to ten percent (10%) of the bid in the form of cash, Manager's check only payable to PDIC. Bid forms and Conditions of Bid may be secured from the Resolution Services Department, PDIC Building, 2228 Chino Roces Avenue, Makati City. For further information, please dial trunk line no. 841-4000 locals 4215/4219/4220/4221/4222/4298.

The winning bidder shall undertake the responsibility to acquire and maintain peaceful possession and enjoyment of the property without seeking the assistance of PDIC.

PDIC reserves the right to withdraw any or all of the properties offered for sale at anytime before the deadline submission of offers, and to reject any or all bids or to accept such offers as will be considered most advantageous to PDIC. In case an occurrence of flood storm or other natural disaster shall result in the cancellation of holding the public bidding on the published date, such public bidding shall be held on the next working day.

CORPORATE ASSETS DISPOSAL COMMITTEE

(PDI-Dec. 20, 2005)

OBITUARIES

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING DIVISION
Main Office: PASONG TAMO, MAKATI CITY
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☎ 912-9008-11 Fax 912-9011
SM MEGAMALL, MANDALUYONG CITY
☎ 6350219 ☎ 6372008 Fax 6350220
G/F TRINITY BLDG., 636 T.M. KALAW ST., ERMITA, MANILA
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INQUIRER OBITUARIES

OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:

❶ Copy of Death Certificate;
❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

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Manila – 711-6931 to 35

NAME OF DECEASED	PLACE OF VIEWING	INTERMENT/CREMATION	
		DATE & TIME	PLACE
Capt. Orlando Dominguez	Chapel K, Q.C.	12/23/05; 11:30 a.m.	Paz Crematory
Margarita Santos	Chapel B-5, Q.C.	to be announced	La Loma Cemetery
Angelita C. Lim	Chapel B, Q.C.	12/20/05; 1 p.m.	Ever Mem. Park

> **"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord."**
> **2 Corinthians 5:8**

...absent from the body to be present with the Lord.
2 Corinthians 5:8

ROGELIO M. CASTAÑEDA

of Kapitolyo, Pasig City and Mandaluyong City

Peacefully joined his Creator on December 18, 2005 at the age of 68.

His loving wife **NORA**; children **Leo** and **Bless**, **Annie** and **Raul**, **Winnie** and **Mario & Marcia**; grandchildren **Kaila**, **Margaux** and **Joshua** and relatives request the pious readers to pray for his eternal rest and everlasting happiness.

His remains lie in state at the Arlington East
1354 C. Raymundo Avenue corner Mercedes Avenue, Pasig City.

Interment will be announced later.

THE HERITAGE PARK
FORT BONIFACIO
Funeral Home and Crematory
845-2334 to 38; 845-2440

CLASSIFIEDS

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation
Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio
Taguig, Metro Manila, Philippines
Telephone 8931320 ext. 5179 Fax 8401461

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites prospective Partners to apply for eligibility and, if subsequently found eligible, to bid for the project:

MINERAL EXPLORATION/ASSESSMENT WORK IN THE ZAMBOANGA SIBUGAY EXPLORATION PERMIT AREA UNDER EXPLORATION PERMIT NO. EXP - 002 - 97- IX - SECOND RENEWAL
(EDC 05-174-1)

Prospective partners must meet these criteria.

1. Any Filipino citizen of legal age and with capacity to contract; or a corporation, partnership, association or cooperative organized or authorized for the purpose of engaging in mining with technical and financial capability to undertake mineral resources development and duly registered in accordance with law at least sixty percent (60%) of the capital of which is owned by Filipino citizens, provided, that a legally organized foreign-owned corporation (i.e. any corporation, partnership, association or cooperative duly registered in accordance with law in which less than fifty percent (50%) of the capital is owned by Filipino citizens) shall also be deemed eligible.
2. With a minimum authorized capital stock of Ten Million Philippine Pesos (PhP 10,000,000.00) and a minimum paid-up capital of Two Million Five Hundred Thousand Philippine Pesos (PhP 2,500,000.00);
3. With at least two (2) geologists having a minimum of five-year professional experience. The submission of curricula vitae and track records in mining operations and environmental management of the technical personnel who shall undertake the activities in the submitted Work Program shall be strictly required as a mandatory requirement, and
4. In case of a corporation, must declare and show proof that it is already a holder of an Exploration Permit (EP), Mineral Agreement (MA) or Financial or Technical Assistance Agreement (FTAA).

The compliance of a corporation to criterion # 4 shall automatically establish its eligibility to bid for the subject project.

The Eligibility Documents shall be available for issuance to interested parties starting December 13, 2005 from the PD-Contracts Administration Group / BAC Secretariat [c/o Francis T. Tolibas (loc. 5179)] upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **Philippine Peso Five Hundred (PhP 500.00)**, or **US Dollar Ten (US$ 10.00)** in case of foreign bidders to defray courier expenses. The Bidding Documents shall be issued to eligible bidders on January 6, 2006 10:00 A.M. by the PD-Contracts Administration Group / BAC Secretariat [c/o F. T. Tolibas (loc. 5179)] upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **Philippine Peso Five Thousand (PhP 5,000.00)**, or **US Dollar One Hundred Thirty (US$ 130.00)** in case of foreign bidders to defray courier expenses.

For purposes of clarifying certain issues, interested parties are invited to a clarificatory meeting to be held on December 20, 2005 10:00 A.M. at the BAC Conference Room, Bldg. V, PNOC-EDC, Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila, Philippines. Site inspection will be held thereafter at the exploration site in Sibugay, Zamboanga, Philippines (to be scheduled later).

Interested parties shall submit their respective Letter of Intent and sealed Application for Eligibility in three (3) sets to the PD-Contracts Administration Group / BAC Secretariat, PNOC-Energy Development Corporation, Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila, Philippines not later than 5:00 P.M. on January 5, 2006. The parties Application for Eligibility will be evaluated and parties who are eligible to bid will be notified by PNOC-EDC.

Eligible parties shall then be required to submit their Financial Proposal in two separate sealed envelopes. All bids submitted by eligible parties must be accompanied by a bid security, callable on demand and valid for a period of One Hundred Twenty (120) calendar days reckoned from the date of bid opening for an amount of at least **Philippine Peso One Hundred Seventy-Eight Thousand Eighty (PhP178,080.00)**, if in the form of cash, cashier's check / manager's check, or certified check; **Philippine Peso Two Hundred Sixty-Seven Thousand One Hundred Twenty (PhP267,120.00)**, if in the form of a bank guarantee; or **Philippine Peso Four Hundred Forty-Five Thousand Two Hundred (PhP445,200.00)**, if in the form of a surety bond. The bids must be delivered to

Bids and Awards Committee
c/o PD-Contracts Administration Group / BAC Secretariat
PNOC-Energy Development Corporation
Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio
Taguig, Metro Manila, Philippines

At or before 2:00 P.M. on January 27, 2006. Bids will be opened immediately thereafter in the presence of bidders representative who chose to attend.

PNOC-EDC reserves the right to annul the bidding process, to reject any or all bids, to waive any informality in the bids received and to accept such bid which is most advantageous to PNOC-EDC without thereby incurring liability to the affected bidder or bidders or any obligation to inform the affected bidder or bidders on the ground of PNOC-EDC's action.

The Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - Dec. 13 & 20, 2005)

WESTERN VISAYAS MEDICAL CENTER
Mandurriao, Iloilo City
Fax No. 321-1797
E-mail Address: wvmc@mozcom.com

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Department of Health (DOH) – Western Visayas Medical Center through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) invites suppliers/manufacturers/distributors/contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of the Project	Supply and delivery of Various Pharmaceuticals
Location	Western Visayas Medical Center
Brief Description	The Bidder shall provide the supply and delivery of Various Pharmaceuticals
Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC)	Php 36,902,333.80
Contract Duration	6 months
Delivery Period	Within fifteen days after each receipt of Purchase Order

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last two years with an amount of at least 50% of the proposed project for bidding. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the preliminary Examination of Bids shall be non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security Performance Security Pre-bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

Activities	Schedule
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	December 26, 2005 – January 10, 2006
2. Pre-bid Conference	January 11, 2006
3. Submission of Letter of Intent and Application for Eligibility (if single-stage bidding is used, delete this activity)	N/A
4. Opening of Bids	January 26, 2006
5. Bid Evaluation	January 27, 2006 – February 11, 2006
6. Post-qualification	February 12, 2006 – February 19, 2006
7. Notice of Award	March 19, 2006

Bid documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of a non-refundable amount of Php 3,000.00 to the DOH-Western Visayas Medical Center cashier.

The DOH-Western Visayas Medical center assumes no responsibility, whatsoever, to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

Approved:
(Sgd.) FREIDA G. SORONGON, RN, MAN
BAC-Chairman

(PDI – December 20 & 27, 2005)

Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Region VII, Cebu City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

WAREHOUSING SERVICES FOR NFA CEBU

LEASE OF A MAXIMUM AGGREGATE AREA OF 13,333 SQ. METERS FOR GRAINS WAREHOUSE STORAGE SPACE

The **NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY**, through its *Corporate Budget for 2006*, intends to apply the sum of **PESOS: TEN MILLION NINE HUNDRED THIRTY THREE THOUSAND and SIXTY** (Ps.10,933,060.00) being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the lease of a maximum aggregate area of 13,333 sq.meters for grains warehouse storage space for NFA Cebu City. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at bid opening.

The **NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY** now calls for the submission of Letter of Intent (LOI) from potential bidders to apply first for the accreditation of the warehouse(s) intended to be leased as grains warehouse storage space for NFA Cebu City prior to the issuance of Bidding Documents.

Interested Bidders shall submit their Letter of Intent (LOI) to the BAC Secretariat together with the following warehouse accreditation requirements: a) Certificate of Occupancy; b) Proof of Warehouse Ownership; c) Floor Plan of Warehouse; and d) Location Map / Sketch Plan.

Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the BAC Secretariat, NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY, Banilad, Cebu City.

The **NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY** will issue the complete set of Bidding Documents only to prospective bidders who had been issued a Notice of Warehouse Accreditation by BAC and upon payment of a non-refundable amount of PESOS: THREE THOUSAND (Ps. 3,000.00). The Bidding Documents shall be reviewed personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedure using non-discretionary pass / fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138)

Following is the schedule of bidding activities:

ACTIVITY	SCHEDULE (Date/Time)
1. Submission of Letter of Intent (LOI)	December 20, 2005 – January 03, 2006
2. Issuace of Notice of Accreditation/ Non-Accreditation and Issuance of Bidding Documents	December 20, 2005 – January 05, 2006
3. Pre-Bidding Conference	January 06, 2006 @ 10:00 AM
4. Opening of Bids	January 19, 2006 @10:00 AM

Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in an amount at least equal to, and not lower than a percentage of the Approved Budget for the Contract to be bid, in the following schedule and form or any combination thereof

Form of Security	Minimum Amount In % of ABC to be Bid
Cash/Cashier's/Manager's Check Payable to NFA issued by a reputable Commercial Bank in Cebu City or	One Percent (1%)
Surety Bond issued by GSIS marked "Callable on Demand"	Two & a Half Percent (2.5%)

Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders or their respective representatives who choose to attend the bidding. Late Bids shall not be accepted.

Availability of the leased warehouse is required upon receipt of Notice to Occupy until December 31, 2006, or upon completion of withdrawal of stocks by NFA whichever is applicable.

The **NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY** reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
PIOLITO C. SANTOS
NFA Training Center, 3rd Floor, Banilad, Cebu City
Tel. No. 032-232 1939 / Fax No. 032-233-6095
Email address: nfaro7@cvis.net.ph
Website: www.nfacebu.net.ph

(Sgd.) PIOLITO C. SANTOS
RBAC Chairman / ARD

(PDI-Dec. 20 & 27, 2005)

PNOC ENERGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, 1200 Taguig City, Philippines
P.O. Box 2102 MCPO Tel. No. 893-6001 to 47/893-1320; Fax no. 840-1575

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites qualified contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the project:

NON-DESTRUCTIVE TESTING (NDT) SERVICES FOR THE NORTHERN NEGROS GEOTHERMAL PROJECT – FLUID COLLECTION AND REINJECTION SYSTEM
EDC 05-202

The Approved Budget is PhP 3,428,509.48 chargeable against PNOC-EDC fund. The contract duration is 200 calendar days.

Application forms for eligibility and bidding documents may be secured from the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group (c/o Francis T. Tolibas local 5179) starting **December 13, 2005** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **Pesos: Five Hundred (PhP 500.00)**.

For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on **December 15, 2005 at 10:00 p.m.** at the BAC Conference Room, First Floor, Building V, PNOC-EDC, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila.

The application for eligibility, letter of intent and sealed bids shall be received by the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group, First Floor, Building V, PNOC-EDC, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila **not later than 2:00 p.m. (Contracts Administration Group Office Wall Clock Time) of January 4, 2006** and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

PNOC-EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder whose bid is considered most advantageous to PNOC-EDC.

The Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI--Dec. 13 & 20, 2005)

PNOC ENERGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, 1200 Taguig City, Philippines
P.O. Box 2102 MCPO Tel. No. 893-6001 to 47 / 893-1320 Fax No. 840-1575

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC - Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites interested contractors registered with the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) and classified, at least, as Category C & D / IAC Small Sub-Category B General Engineering or General Building Contractor to apply for eligibility and to bid for the project:

SUPPLY, FABRICATION, DELIVERY AND INSTALLATION OF VARIOUS VALVE PLATFORMS FOR THE LEYTE GEOTHERMAL PRODUCTION FIELD - FLUID COLLECTION AND REINJECTION SYSTEM (LGPF-FCRS)
EDC 05-201

The Approved Budget is PhP 7,842,350.00 chargeable against PNOC-EDC fund. The contract duration is 210 calendar days.

Application Forms for Eligibility and Bid documents may be secured from the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group (c/o N.A. Nicolasora) starting **December 20, 2005** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **Pesos: One Thousand Five Hundred (PhP 1,500.00)**.

Site inspection shall be conducted on **January 19, 2006, 10 A.M.** at the Leyte Geothermal Production Field (LGPF). For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on **January 26, 2006, 10:00 A.M.** at PNOC-EDC, 1st Floor Building 5, PNOC-EDC, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City, Metro Manila.

Application for Eligibility and sealed bids shall be received by the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group at PNOC-EDC, 1st Floor Building 5, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City, Metro Manila, not later than **2:00 p.m. on February 23, 2006** and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

PNOC - EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to abort the bidding process, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder whose bid is considered most advantageous to PNOC-EDC.

BAC CHAIRMAN

(PDI--Dec. 20, 2005)

Rebustillo – Rito clan reunion

THE REBUSTILLO - RITO Clan of Bikol will have its whole day grand reunion on Tuesday, Dec. 27 at the Cesar Rebustillo – de Paula's Farm in Rizal St., Oas, Albay. Hosting this year's reunion is the family of Felisa R. Rebustillo vda. De Sotto. Family members are requested to contact Janet M. Mago (09214647761) and Lorli B. Sotto (0524856314).

DOUGLAS J. ABBOTT, #53040
Attorney at Law
4966 El Camino Real, Suite 125
Los Altos, Ca 94022-1406
(650) 967-1001

Attorney for Petitioner

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA

In the Matter of the Adoption Petition of	No. 105 A 091531
	CITATION TO APPEAR AT HEARING
SAMSON D. AGBAYANI Adopting Parent,	(Family Code S8604b)

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

To LUISITO S. TABURADA:

YOU ARE CITED to appear at 9:00 a.m. on Feb. 10, 2006, in Department 60 of the above-entitled court, located at 115 Terraine Street, San Jose, California. At that time and place, you must show cause why the petition of SAMSON D. AGBAYANI to adopt your minor child, KACYS LUV F. TABURADA, should not be granted without your consent in the above-entitled proceeding, on the ground that you have abandoned that child. The adoption petition alleges that for a period of one year after April, 2003, you willfully failed to communicate with, and pay for the care, support and education of, the above child although you were able to do so. A copy of the petition is on file with the court.

YOU ARE FURTHER ADVISED that if you appear at the above hearing and wish to have legal counsel but are unable to afford counsel, the court will appoint counsel on your behalf.

Dated : Dec. 8, 2005 Clerk of the Superior Court
By : B. Forbes
Deputy Clerk

CITATION TO APPEAR AT HEARING

(PDI – Dec. 20 & 27, 2005 & Jan 2 & 9, 2006)

POWERSPEAK'S PERSONAL AWARENESS AND LEADERSHIP SEMINAR

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WIN
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IS TO
CREATE

Shown are the graduates of the Batch 6 of PowerSpeak's Personal Awareness and Leadership seminar (PALs) held last Nov. 11-13. The graduates attest that the three-day seminar was highly experiential and insightful, providing them with an enlightening fresh perspective towards life. PALs is based on the fundamental principle that each individual possesses unlimited, untapped potential and unlocking these allows a person to achieve greater results and abundance. Also in photo is Joey P. Reyes, back row, third from right (wearing a suit), facilitator and president of PowerSpeak, Inc. PALs Batch 7 is stated on Dec. 2-4. Interested parties may inquire at 840-5958 and 840-5960, or text 0917-5555639. You may also email them at powerspeak@gmail.com or log on to www.powerspeakph.com.

UPGRADE 2006: The 17th UP Diliman Job Fair

EXPECTING GRADUATION? LOOKING FOR the perfect employer? Grab your resumes and brush up on the interview basics as the University of the Philippines Office of Counseling and Guidance and the UP Junior Philippine Institute of Accountants stage UPGRADE 2006, the 17th University Job Fair. The event will be held from Jan. 23-27, 2006 at the heart of UP Diliman, at the Bahay ng Alumni. The entire graduating class of the University is expected to participate in this annual event. Everyone is enjoined to participate and be part of this grand event. Companies who are interested to put up booths and participate in the event are most welcome. For any inquiries, please do contact the following numbers: Tel. No./Fax No.: 926.4162 or Tel No.: 929.5835 or email us at upjobfair2006@yahoo.com. You may also contact the organizing committee through: 0917.8158540 (Jill); 0919.5608386 (Maila); 0915.4082972 (Pete); 0916.2034170 (Kristy); 0917.8584532 (Crystle).

BUSINESS

December inflation expected to hit 6.8%

But downtrend noted due to drop in world oil prices

By Michelle V. Remo

CONSUMER PRICES ARE EXPECTED TO increase year-on-year by 6.8 to 7 percent in December, even if it reflects a slowdown from the November inflation rate of 7.1 percent, the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) yesterday said.

Although year-on-year inflation is still high, Neda is now seeing a downward trend in the latter part of the year because of a high base last year, while oil prices have remained below the $60-a-barrel level, said Dennis Arroyo, Neda director for policy and planning.

Arroyo also said that wages were relatively stable in December, thus limiting inflationary pressures.

While Dubai crude, the benchmark used in setting local oil prices, has breached the $60-a-barrel mark this year, it has begun to subside a bit in the last quarter. In the first 15 days of December, Dubai crude has averaged at $52.04 a barrel.

The unexpected increase in oil prices this year has kept the average inflation rate at 7.7 percent in the first 10 months.

Arroyo said inflation is seen to be higher next year because of the impact of the scheduled increase in the value-added tax rate from 10 to 12 percent starting Feb. 1, 2006.

Inflation for next year will likely settle at 8.5 percent, although the agency is keeping a projection range of between 8 and 8.5 percent, he added.

Also, members of the interagency Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC) will meet today to discuss the possible hike of the foreign exchange rate forecast for 2006, Arroyo said.

Napocor cuts fuel costs by ₱1B in '05

By Abigail L. Ho

DEL CALLAR

THE STATE-RUN NATIONAL Power Corp. has cut fuel costs by more than P1 billion to only P11.8 billion this year.

Napocor president Cyril Del Callar yesterday said in a statement that the state firm managed to bring down fuel costs by reducing the use of its oil-fired power plants.

This year, Napocor bought only 709 million liters of fuel oil for its power plants. Last year, the power firm spent more than P13 billion in acquiring 1 million liters of fuel for its oil-fired facilities all over the country.

When world oil prices started rising to unprecedented heights, Napocor, together with other government agencies, took the necessary steps to lessen its dependence on oil.

The debt-saddled state firm this year implemented drastic fuel reduction measures after the price of crude oil surged to P16.71 a liter from only P12.60 a liter last year.

Since January, Napocor started giving priority dispatch to generation plants utilizing cheaper fuel or renewable energy sources.

During the rainy season, for example, Del Callar said Napocor took advantage of the abundant water supply by increasing the use of hydroelectric power plants to more than 17 percent from only 12 percent a year before.

In Luzon, oil only accounted for 1 percent of the generation mix as compared with more than 9 percent last year, he said.

Del Callar said Napocor would reduce oil use to less than 10 percent of the overall generation mix.

According to Napocor data, oil now accounts for less than 8 percent of the nationwide generation mix. Coal continues to be the most used fuel at 40 percent, followed by geothermal at 22 percent, hydro at 17 percent and natural gas at 13 percent.

Also, Del Callar said Napocor would continue to implement other cost-cutting measures and reforms to enable the firm to break even.

The state firm last year posted P29.9 billion in losses, significantly lower than the P117 billion registered in 2003.

Del Callar expressed confidence that the state firm would be able to break even this year.

"Our target is to bring (Napocor) back to profitability," he said. "With the reforms that we have put in place, and continue to put in place, we are optimistic that we will be able to meet our targets."

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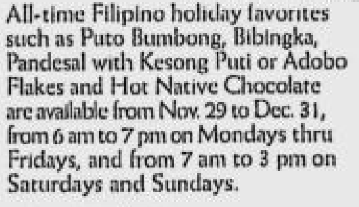

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All-time Filipino holiday favorites such as Puto Bumbong, Bibingka, Pandesal with Kesong Puti or Adobo Flakes and Hot Native Chocolate are available from Nov. 29 to Dec. 31, from 6 am to 7 pm on Mondays thru Fridays, and from 7 am to 3 pm on Saturdays and Sundays.

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Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

MONDAY ARTS & BOOKS ◉ TUESDAY FITNESS ◉ WEDNESDAY 2BU ◉ THURSDAY FOOD ◉ FRIDAY FASHION & BEAUTY

The lighter side of fitness

ILLUSTRATION: STEPH BRAVO

Part one

WELL AND GOOD

Tina Juan

CHRISTMAS IS THE MOST hectic season of the year. Everyone is running around trying to finish gift lists and attending holiday parties.

Fitness centers can be the loneliest of places starting mid-December. Keeping fit and losing weight are probably the last priority in people's lives at this time. So let's keep the mood light and take a look at the lighter side of fitness.

Outrageous exercises

In FitStep.Com, personal trainer Nick Nilsson writes, "In the course of my experience working and training in gyms, I've seen people doing some incredibly 'interesting' exercises. Here are some of the top winners:

- **Dumbbell hair combs.** Start by holding a dumbbell in front of you. Do a front-raise with it, then whip the dumbbell back and over the top of your head like you're combing your hair with it. Make sure to just miss your skull.
- **Hog-tied face-rubs.** Lie on your stomach on the floor. Grasp your ankles behind your back and rub your face back and forth on the ground repeatedly. Continue until you've had enough.
- **Abdominal earthquakes.** Lie on the floor on your back in the classic start position of a crunch. Now yank as hard as you can on the back of your head up and down and thrash your legs around in the air like you're fending off starving dogs. This evidently works your abs. You will resemble Jell-O that has just been dropped on the floor. Your face should be as red as a tomato by the time you're done.
- **Dumbbell doggy digs.** Bend over at the waist so that your back is rounded completely over like an arch. Your legs should be completely straight and locked out. You should look like you are trying

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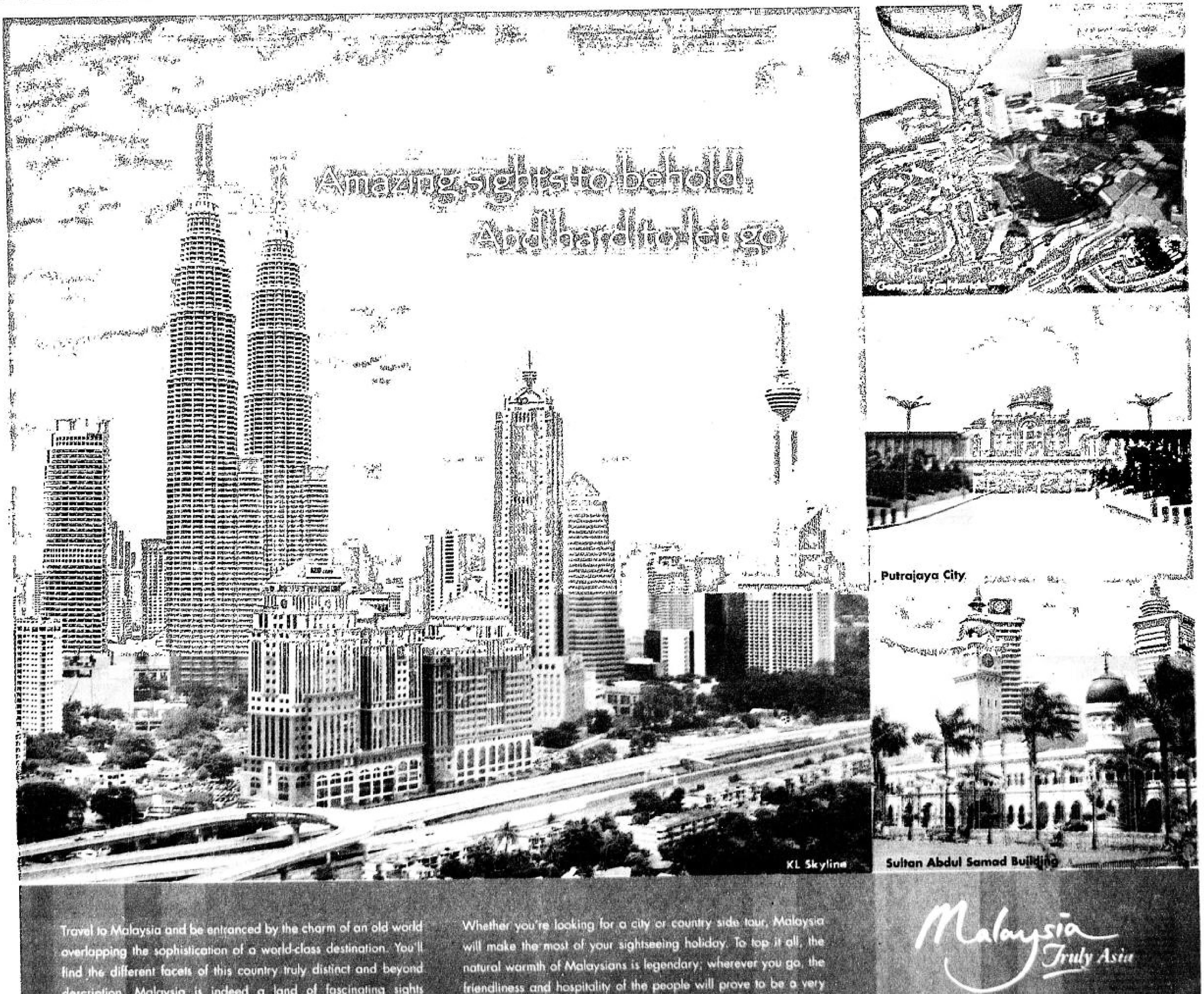

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ANNE Tullis, Gulf Air PR manager; Roberto Hukom, Gulf Air country manager-Philippines; Vilma Selga, president and CEO of ConceptOne; and Richard Ostrowski, executive vice president for corporate affairs and public relations of ConceptOne; (seated) eye-catching TV host Cory Quirino interviews Gulf Air's hotshot chief executive and the man of the hour, James Hogan

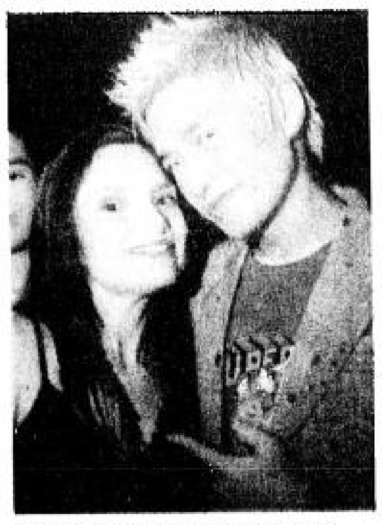
LEO Brand; Mega's Carla Sibal; Philip Abadicio; Gulf Express Corp. marketing officer Lara Santos; Gulf Air marketing and sales officer Suzette Tongson; and Lifestyle Asia's Heidi Ng with her mother Rose

PETRON hotshot executives Sulaiman Ababtain and Khalid Al Faddagh with Saeed Bin Hamad Altunagi of the UAE Embassy and Gulf Air-GSA representatives

Sky's the luxury

PAGCOR'S pretty-as-a-picture Ria Coronel and Global One's hotshot party organizer Ivan Zalameda

TOP fashion models Joanne Padilla and Eazel Don love Hennessy's cool drinks.

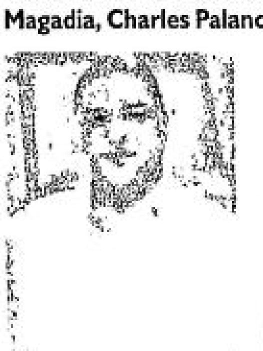


ACTRESS Snooky Serna with one of Embassy's main men, Tim Yap

CEBU-BASED model Vince Canizares and Elaine

WATERFRONT Hotel's vice chair Reno Magadia, Charles Palanca and Raffy Ocampo

MYX VJ Karel Marquez

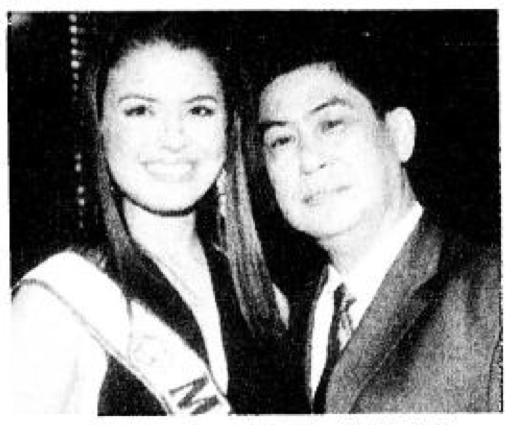


MICHAEL Deakin, president of Lifeline Arrows

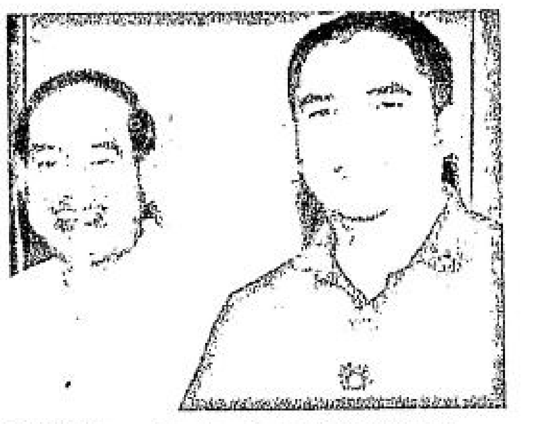
DR. DONNA de Padua, medical director of Lifeline Arrows

SMART gals who shake the business world: Lady Dante dela Cruz, Healthway marketing manager; Carmie de Leon, Healthway sales manager; and Jacqueline Tierra, Clarity Aesthetic and Laser Center Division operations manager

BRILLIANT minds joining forces: Michellina Triwardhany, Citibank Cards business director; Mariano Que, Mercury Drug founder; Nina Aguas, Citibank country manager for Global Consumer Group; and Vivian Que-Azcona, Mercury Drug president



MS EARTH 2004 Brazil's Priscilla Meirelles with Gulf Air's Roberto Hukom



DOTC Usec. Tom Lantion and Ferdinand Lagman of the DOTC

GEENA Zablan of Heritage Hotel; dance empress Becky Garcia; southern belle Suzette Tongson of Gulf Air; and Tina Pamintuan of "Chefs on the Go"

GULF AIR IS ONE AIRLINE THAT HAS received all sorts of prestigious awards, including the new restaurant in the sky that provides a one-of-a-kind "dine on demand" service with a world-class chef ready to take your order, *palanggas*.

Moi was lucky enough to experience Gulf Air's fab service when I went with the Bench group to Athens.

So when I recently received an invite from Gulf Air Philippines to attend a cocktail party at the Shangri-La Hotel in Makati, in honor of Gulf Air's hotshot president and chief executive, so *charmant* **James Hogan** no less, who was here a-visiting, *moi* dropped everything!

Faster than you could bat an eyelash, I found myself mingling and rubbing elbows with government and embassy officials, mega executives from multinational companies, jetsetters from the travel industry, and loads of Gulf Air clients, dahlings.

Naturellement, DOTC men of the hour, Undersecretary **Tom Lantion** and DOTC Action center head **Ferdinand Lagman**, had many invitees asking travel-related questions.

Petron Corporation's president and chief executive officer, suave and so dignified **Khalid D. Al Faddagh**, breezed in with his right-hand man, Petron's vice president for corporate planning, **Sulaiman Ababtain**. He chatted with Mr. Hogan, and with the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates' deputy head of mission, **Saeed Bin Hamad Altunagi**, and **Alp Atakcan** of the Turkish Embassy.

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by Alex Van Hagen using **Kodak** EasyShare system

Almost stealing the show from the honorees were eye-catching beauties like Ms Body Beautiful herself, **Cory Quirino**; **Becky Garcia**, all set for her wedding on the 14th; TV's "Chefs On the Go's" stunning head-turner **Tina Pamintuan**; and Miss Earth 2004, gorgeous **Priscilla Meirelles** of Brazil. These gals had many men looking their way, dahlings.

It was one of those really fun happenings where you just didn't feel like leaving. But then, that's par for the course when you have such fantastic hosts as Gulf Air's brilliant country manager **Roberto Hukom** and marketing and sales officer **Suzette Tongson**, plus the rest of the Gulf Air and GSA Gulf Express Corp. rah-rah team, *natch*.

Luxury brand

Hennessy, that luxury cognac brand with over 240 years of history, recently joined Manila's fast-paced nightlife with a classic bash held at chi-chi Embassy Super Club, *palanggas*.

Hennessy's hotshot brand manager, **Randy Uson**, teamed up with Global One's chief party organizer, **Ivan Zalameda**, to come up with a happening aimed at capturing the brand's rich heritage.

No less than Manila's top DJs rocked the "throwback"-themed party. There were **Manolet Dario, Bembol Balquiedra** and **Martin Pulgar** alternating in the Main Dance Room, while workasonic **Jon Herrera** and **Mars Miranda** transformed the exclusive VIP Room into a virtual time warp with their hip mixes of '80s, disco and cool soulful funk music that got our town's creme rocking, dahlings.

"Hennessy cognac can be enjoyed in a host of different ways and places. Whether it is served in a traditional snifter glass, as a long drink, on the rocks, or in the most inventive cocktail, Hennessy is always associated with refinement and seduction. It is the drink for special occasions," explained Randy Uson to us.

By 9 p.m., Embassy was rocking with a mix of society and business hotshots like **Paolo Martel, Kai Prieto, Jon Jon Osmeña, Anton** and **Cris Palanca, Derrick Chiongbian**, investment banker **Tito Serafica**, Citibank's **Dennis Dionisio**, plus others like them who sipped Hennessy in all sorts of awesome concoctions till they felt it was time to crash home, *natch*!

Health and wealth

One usually dashes off to a pharmacist to get medicine or what have you. But this time, *palanggas*, *moi* dropped all appointments to make sure I was present during a day of health, beauty and wellness treats (which is really up my alley) when the new fab Mercury Drug Citibank Visa was launched.

Held at The Loft in Rockwell, the event gave us a chance to enjoy a classic health and wellness fair. Clarity Aesthetic and Laser Center offered free facials and diamond peel procedures, while OSIM allowed invitees to sample its iMedic massage chair. Healthway Medical clinics also gave quickie baseline checkups.

Meanwhile, the Medical City team held free consultations, Health Today magazine offered a 5-percent discount, and Lifeline Arrows discussed the importance of their lifesaving ambulance services.

Here, there and everywhere were bank hotshots, like Citibank's country business manager for global consumer group, brilliant **Nina Aguas**; marketing director **Cecille Fonacier** and Cards business director **Michellina Triwardhany**. Also present were Mercury Drug's *tres charmant* husband-and-wife team, chair **Mariano Que** and president **Vivian Que-Azcona**.

Fashionable Nina then went onstage and welcomed us. "As the country's leading credit card company, we at Citibank, in collaboration with Mercury Drug, has given birth to a credit card that offers generous rebates and discounts for health and wellness products and services."

Next was Vivian Que-Azcona, who explained that this partnership with Citibank comes as Mercury Drug celebrates its 60th anniversary. "This launch is proof of how we continue with our untiring efforts to always give our customers the best value for money," she said.

Having this cool Mercury Drug Citibank Card in your wallet definitely makes healthy living truly rewarding.

And to make a long story short, dahlings, I got one. Hey, you should, too.

mercury drug
citibank

HEY! The card to have is proudly displayed by Frances Bumanlag, Asian Eye Institute marketing manager; Arlene Magtira and Irene Acosta, Citibank program managers; and Rica Icban, Asian Eye Institute marketing associate.

HOT achievers: Citibank's Marivic Aro and Bea Tan flank Antoinette Lao, Visa's senior business development manager.

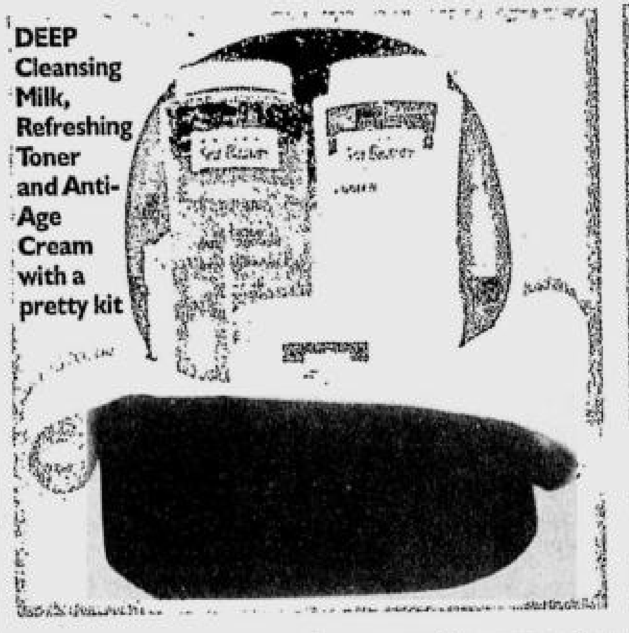
Gifts with natural marine ingredients

THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, Natural Sea Beauty, a skin-care line containing marine ingredients from the Dead Sea and manufactured in Israel by the L'Oreal group, is offering three different gift sets: Foaming Bath Salts and Purifying Mud Body Scrub; Purifying Mud Mask, Mud Cleansing Gel and Purifying Mud Facial Scrub; Deep Cleansing Milk and Refreshing Toner and Mineral Anti-Age Cream.

Purchase any of these sets entitles you to a free travel pouch.

Natural Sea Beauty products are available at Landmark, Ayala Center Cebu and Watsons outlets in SM Megamall Bldg. A , SM Makati, SM San Lazaro, SM Las Piñas, SM Bacoor, SM North Edsa, SM Cebu, Greenbelt 1, Daimaru, The Podium, Gateway Mall, Harrison Plaza.

MUD Mask, Mud Cleansing Gel and Mud Facial Scrub in a clear pouch bag



DEEP Cleansing Milk, Refreshing Toner and Anti-Age Cream with a pretty kit

FOAMING Bath Salts Purifying Mud Body Scrub in a novelty pouch

Gift of comfort

AT A LOSS OVER WHAT TO give someone who has everything? You can't go wrong with a gift that pampers and ensures good health.

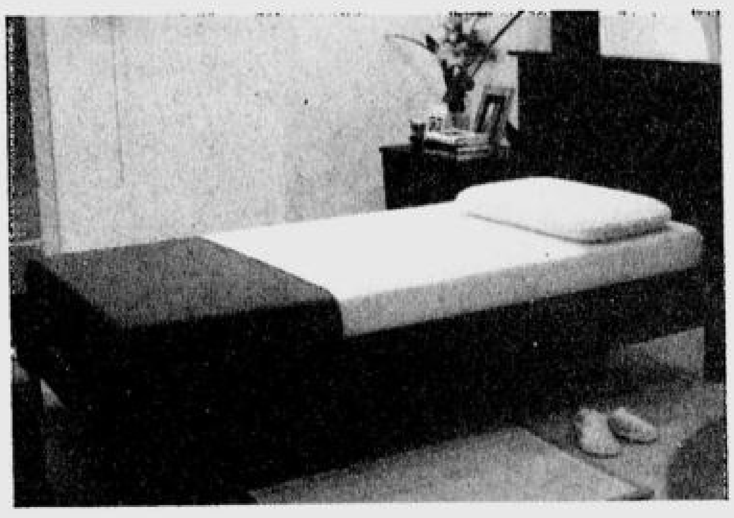
Check out the the Tempur mattresses and pillows at the Tempur store on the fifth level of Shangri-la Plaza Mall.

Made of NASA-recognized visco-elastic, temperature-sensitive material, Tempur allows a person's spine and joints to rest in their natural positions, causing the least possible stress on muscles and nerves.

The mattress, unlike ordinary metal spring or foam, does not create pressure points that trigger restlessness during the night. It prevents bodily pain caused by unnatural sleeping positions because it moulds to the exact contours of the body.

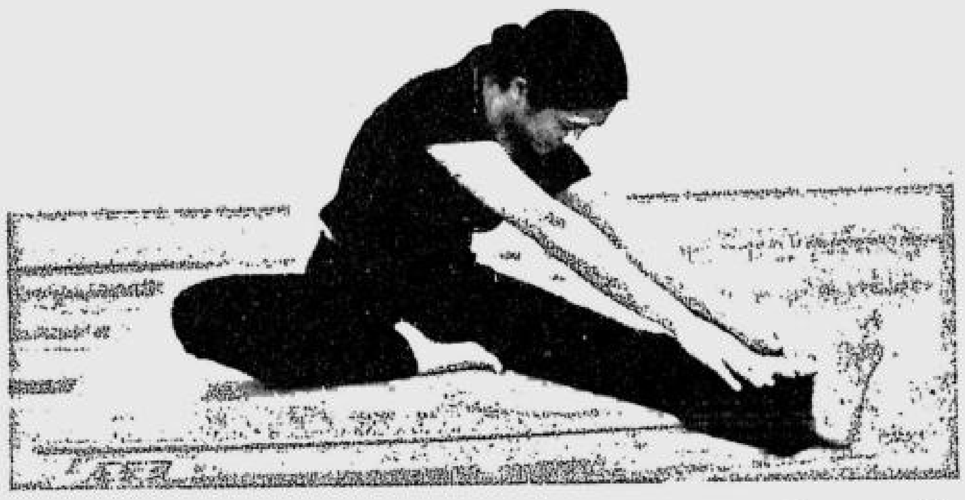
The pillow, which assures maximum comfort to the neck and shoulder muscles, can relieve pain, snoring and sleep problems. It is designed to cradle the head, neck and spine in perfect alignment, filling the hollow at the neck area between the head and shoulders.

Accessories such as transit pillows, leg spacers, seat cushions and lumbar support are also available. Call 6311391.



EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Seated hamstring stretch



STRETCHES THE BACK OF THE THIGHS (hamstrings) that are usually tight in a lot of people. Tight hamstrings can contribute to lower back pain by pulling the pelvis and spine into a kyphotic or "flat-back" posture. Tight hamstrings are also more prone to getting strained or pulled during sports or everyday activities.

Equipment

Exercise mat

Exercise technique

1. Sit with your left leg straight in front of you, your right leg bent at the knee with your foot against your inner thigh.
2. Slowly lean forward from your hip joint until you feel a stretch in the back of your right thigh.
3. Hold the stretch for 15-30 seconds. Continue breathing normally.
4. Do the other leg.

Performance tips

1. Lean forward from your hip joint not your spine.
2. Avoid starting the movement by bending the head.
3. Avoid stretching to the point of pain.
4. If you flex your foot, you will also feel a stretch in the calf.

The lighter side of fitness

From page C1

hard to touch your toes but not really succeeding. Hold two dumbbells down at arms-length. Now spin them round and round repeatedly just off the floor so you resemble a dog digging a hole.

- **Pec rockets.** Set the pec deck machine with far too much weight for you to handle safely. Make sure you are very sweaty and slippery before attempting this one. First, use your entire bodyweight to get one arm pad up to the front. Then, throw yourself at the other one to get it to the front. Hold them there for a half-second then get shot four feet out across the floor as you squirt from the machine like a greased banana.

Exercise equipment

If you bought one too many pieces of home exercise equipment from television infomercials that are now gathering dust in your closets, Nilsson has discovered how to recycle them to tenderize meat. If you don't see your "white elephant" in the list below, use your imagination.

- **Dumbbells.** Bash the meat with the dumbbell repeatedly. Great shoulder and arm exercise, too! May increase the iron content of your food significantly.
- **Ab rollers.** Lay the meat down below the headrest and rock violently back and forth on top of it.
- **ThighMaster.** Set the meat on the counter, squeeze the ThighMaster shut with your hands then release the spring on top of the meat like a bear trap.
- **BowFlex.** Remove one of the bows and slap the meat silly with it.
- **Electric ab training belts.** Set the meat on the counter, place the belt on top of it, turn it to the highest level, then lean down on it with all your weight as it tenderizes and sears at the same time.

Fitness program

No need to go to the gym or buy exercise equipment to get fit. An unknown canine-loving author says a dog is all you need to get in shape.

- **Inner thighs.** Place the dog's favorite toy between thighs. Press tighter than the dog can pull. Do not attempt bare-legged. Dogs who favor shortcuts to success will just dig the toy out. You could be damaged.
- **Upper body strength.** Lift the dog off the couch, off the bed, out of the flower bed. Repeat, repeat and repeat. As the dog ages, this exercise is reversed—onto the couch, onto the bed, into the car and so on.
- **Upper arms.** Tug the rope. Tug the pull toy. Tug the sock. Repeat until your shoulder is dislocated or the dog gives up (we all know which comes first).
- **Balance and coordination, exercise 1.** Practice not falling when your dog bounds across the full length of the room, sails through the air, and slams both front paws into the back of your knees.
- **Balance and coordination, exercise 2 (for use with multiple dogs).** Remove all dogs from lap and answer the phone before it stops ringing.
- **Hand coordination.** Remove foreign object from dog's locked jaw. This exercise is especially popular with puppy owners. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat. Remember, this is a timed exercise. Movements must be quick and precise (think concert pianist) to prevent trips to the vet, which only offer the minimal exercise benefit of jaw-firming clenches.
- **Calves.** After the dog has worn out the rest of your body, hang a circular toy on your ankle and let the dog tug while you tug back. Warning: This is feasible only for those with strong bones and small dogs. Have you taken your calcium supplement today?
- **Neck muscles.** Attempt to out-maneuver the canine tongue headed for your ear, mouth or eyeball. This is a lifelong fitness program. A dog is never too old or too feeble to "French kiss" you when you least expect it.

My personal favorite

Q. What is the difference between an aerobics instructor and a dentist?

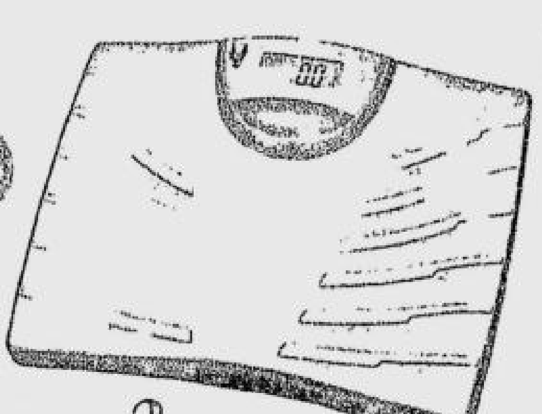
A. A dentist lets you sit down while he hurts you.

Next week: Part Two

Visit www.tinajuanfitness.info

Have a healthier Christmas

1



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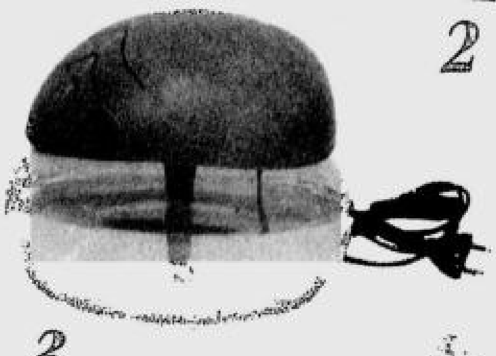

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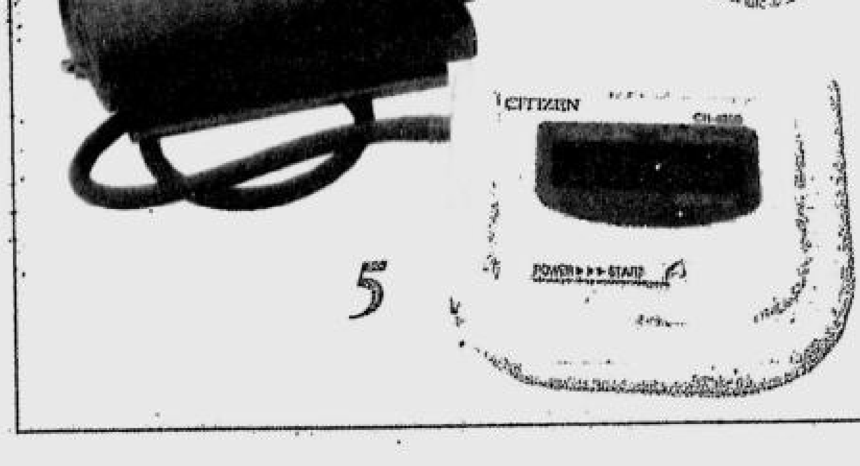

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GET A 10-PERCENT discount on some health and wellness gadgets when you visit any branch of Electronic Boutique until Dec. 31. Here are a few gift ideas for the health-conscious on your list:

1. **Foot spa.** Vibrating bath for the feet to relieve tiredness and improve blood circulation.
2. **Digital weighing scale.** Features a one-inch liquid-crystal display with four-digit readout.
3. **Revitalizer.** Reduces indoor pollution for fresher, purer air.
4. **Ear Thermometer.** Can give body temperature readings in less than three seconds and suitable for infants and small children.
5. **Blood-pressure monitor.** A compact machine used on the wrist and automatically takes readings at the touch of a button.

Also available are Pedometer, which makes counting easier to ensure that an adult takes at least 10,000 steps a day for good health; Passionator, a multi-pronged head massager that stimulates the millions of nerve endings in the scalp; and Fat monitor, which uses bioelectrical impedance to measure body fat versus lean body weight.

Electronic Boutique is located in Park Square, Ayala Center; Robinsons Galleria; Market! Market!; and Alabang Town Center. Call 8990102.

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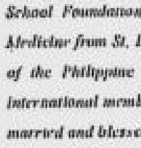
Take Charge Doc!

Is the powder used in firecrackers poisonous? In case of ingestion, what is the emergency management?

Yes, firecracker powder is actually yellow phosphorus which is a corrosive, highly toxic poison. Not only is it corrosive, it also spontaneously combusts in air yielding phosphorus oxide, a highly irritating fume. When ingested it can cause burns on the lining of the stomach and throat, severe vomiting, and diarrhea. Emergency management consists in administration of fluids to counteract the dehydration brought on by vomiting and diarrhea, egg whites to buffer the substance in the gastrointestinal tract, and other supportive measures. In cases of ingestion, it is best to bring the patient to the hospital immediately so that the person's airway may be protected, and other supportive measures may be given promptly. Vomiting should not be induced as this may cause more damage to the esophagus and throat.



This week's answer to our feature question was provided by our three-year medical service provider from Sta. Lucia Healthcare Centre in Cainta, Rizal, Dr. Johnny R. Perez. Doc Johnny is specializes in Emergency Medicine. He obtained his medical degree from the Davao Medical School Foundation in 1995. He took his residency training for Emergency Medicine from St. Luke's Medical Center in 1999. Dr. Perez is a fellow member of the Philippine College of Emergency Medicine & Acute Care and an international member of the American College of Emergency Physicians. He is married and blessed with a daughter

MEDICard members may visit him for consultation services at Sta. Lucia Healthcare Center, Mondays 9:00am to 3pm.

Nicky

MEDICard's Medical Director, Dr. Nicky Montoya answers questions on health through the assistance and expertise of MEDICard's network of accredited specialists. Write to Dr. Nicky or E-mail him at inquiry@medicardphils.com for your inquiries on health matters.

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Let intimacy reign in your heart

INSIDE OUT

Cory Quirino

IT HAS OFTEN BEEN SAID THE MOST youthful-looking people are those who "carry" themselves well. Meaning, they achieve centered-ness within themselves that spells B-A-L-A-N-C-E.

In a world that revolves around the key words "success" and "survival," people are often forced to compete with one another. The environment becomes friendly to stress. Yet, despite the constant emergence of stressful situations, the human psyche is equipped with a coping mechanism. The challenge is to keep this capability fine-tuned and in good working order.

Intimacy vs detachment

Natural to the human emotional makeup is the need to experience intimacy. The lack of intimacy in one's life will push a person toward a cold and dark corner. Note the warning signs that your world is becoming less and less intimate and more and more detached:

1. Work is your priority.
2. Professional and personal goals are more important to you than people/family/loved ones.
3. You avoid one-on-one encounters by deflecting attempts at closeness.
4. You keep busy to the point of exhaustion so your usual excuse is "I'm tired, no energy to talk now…" or "I'm so busy, have no time to spare."

Stop for a moment and consider the effect on others of such a lack of supportiveness, sympathy and warmth. The final result is alienation, which can throw you off-balance.

When you detach yourself from others, the detachment also alienates you from yourself. And when you are alienated from yourself, you are no longer in a cold and dark corner because you become the coldness and darkness itself.

Psychotherapists say the basis for alienation is an unconscious recognition or acceptance of pain, simply because it is much easier to run away from, than face, an emotion.

Practice connecting

The experience of intimacy is not just between two people. It can be with a group whose energies harmonize with yours. With your emotional health in mind, try to do the following:

Workplace: Gather your staff, co-workers, colleagues around. Do an activity together. Talk, share, laugh.

Family: At the dining table, start a conversation. A simple "How was your day?" should be enough to get things started.

Friends: Make it a tradition to keep in touch with your various friends. Set regular lunch or dinner dates to catch up on life.

Community: Feel that the plight of one is the plight of all. Understanding and being supportive of the needs of the less privileged is a sure way to find meaning. Adopt a cause and join a civic club or simply go to the nearest street children village and do volunteer work.

Intimate with the self

Intimacy is the result of love and trust converging. Fear and doubt achieve the opposite. Emotion is very much a part of one's well-being.

Get a piece of paper. Write down your dreams and wishes in their order of importance to you. Read them out loud as though you were sharing them with your best friend. Face your reflection in the mirror with paper and affirm: "My most intimate dreams come true."

Body connect

The first basic step toward intimacy is the power of touch. Use your hands and briskly brush your body for five minutes with your fingertips from feet to top of the head. Feel every contour of your body. That's to stimulate your circulation. Then, rub yourself with a hydrating combination of your favorite body oil, a drop of mint, rose or lavender to relax or lemon/orange to revive.

You can also add three drops of *calamansi* or lemon juice to your carrier oil for a homemade mix. The aromatherapy oil will immediately send relaxation signals to the brain and the rest of your body.

Intimacy is reason itself for being. Allow it to reign in your hearts beginning today.

Love and light!

Have yourself a
Merry
truly Japanese
Christmas

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Schedules: December 25 - open only for Dinner, 6:00 pm to 10:00 pm. January 1 open for Lunch & Dinner

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